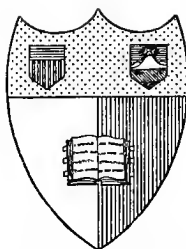




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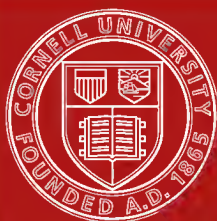
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SHAKESPEAR

SHAKESPEAR

BY

W. CAREW HAZLITT

LONDON

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PREFACE

IT has long seemed a work of supererogation to attempt anything fresh in the way of illustrating the life of WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR, or of revising the text of his plays. Both have constituted, during a long series of years, the earnest and affectionate study of eminent scholars and antiquaries, and no effort has been spared to supply lacunæ in the biography by the recovery of missing documents, and in the writings by the elucidation of obscure or corrupt passages.

Yet it is a matter of absolute certainty that we are very far indeed from being at the end of our co-operative labours on behalf of the National Poet, no less than that all the editions hitherto produced exhibit, in different measures and ways, misreadings and errors. It is to the private and literary history of Shakespear, however, rather than to the settlement of debateable textual points, that I propose to address myself; and I equally aim at seeking, above all, to avoid traversing ground which has been already exhausted, so far at least as the ostensible possibility of arriving at any practical result goes.

Shakespear stands alone in more than one sense—in his unique literary power and in his singular personal character. Charles Knight remarked of him that he is “a man who stands above all other individual men, above all ranks of men; in com-

parison with whom, in his permanent influence upon mankind, generations of nobles, fighting men, statesmen, princes, are but as dust;" and Bulwer Lytton, referring to a man of letters of his own time, declared that it was the property of genius to invest with interest everything associated with it, making it an honour even to have been the contemporaries of such persons, and an hereditary rank to be their descendants.

It is extremely creditable to John Aubrey, who died in 1697, that he should have thus early recognized the durability of the fame of Shakespear, and should, moreover, have foreseen that it would rest on his dramatic works. "His comedies will remain wit," he says, "as long as the English tongue is understood, for that he handles *mores hominum*; now, our present writers reflect so much upon particular persons and coxcombities, that twenty years hence they will not be understood."* It will be my duty to shew that in the very lifetime of Shakespear there was one who already proclaimed him "our ever-living poet"; but this was more especially in reference to his lyrics.

The Wiltshire antiquary and gossip spoke and wrote as an amateur in these matters, and although he did little more than echo the sentiments of Jonson, Davenant, Milton, and Dryden, it is to be remembered that his period was later, when the Elizabethan and Stuart writers had fallen out of vogue. He flourished, however, within measurable distance of Rowe, the poet's first critical editor (1709); and thenceforward we tread on different and on surer and surer ground. Yet even Pope—

* This remark might be stereotyped, so continual and successive is its applicability.

while, according to Spence, he pronounced Bacon “the greatest genius that England (or perhaps any country) ever produced”—condemned the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras as “a bad age,” and thought that Rowe had done ill in writing a play on the Shakespearian model. In other words, Pope shewed far less discernment than Aubrey, yet he merely followed the track of Ravenscroft and others who, in their revivals of Shakespear, courageously pronounced them to be improved texts; and similarly, in his *Lettres Philosophiques*, 1734, Voltaire is found qualifying his admiration for the dramatist by impugning his taste and art.

I had set to myself the task of noting in the modern critical editions readings which seemed to be susceptible of improvement, and of measuring the resources likely to be at my disposal for a new biographical essay. The material lay within reach; but other employments interposed, and I scarcely entertained a serious intention of proceeding farther in the task, till I casually read, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the account of Shakespear by the Editor. I confess that I was disappointed. I saw that Mr. Sidney Lee had profited by the life-long labours of Mr. Halliwell Phillipps; and it would have been surprizing indeed, had he not thrown into a consecutive and readable shape, with occasional additions, a large body of valuable and attractive matter. I then turned to the *Life*, from the same pen, in book-form, which had naturally enjoyed the benefit of revision and augmentation; and I still remained so imperfectly satisfied on grounds, which I hope that I shall appear to justify, that I resumed the consideration of my own half-abandoned design.

Mr. Lee unquestionably did well in basing his work on the

last edition of the *Outlines*, which, regarded as a book, is little better than raw material; but that gentleman has not only dealt incompletely with some biographical points, from an imperfect acquaintance, I presume, with the *data*, or an inadequate valuation of their importance, but he has left numerous others absolutely untouched. We are quite sufficiently ignorant of the career of the great poet not to be able to afford to lose any promising clue or miss any valid suggestion; but it is far more imperative that every circumstance entitled to rank even as a highly probable fact should find its place in a biography such as that of Mr. Lee, and that, if bibliographical details are admitted, they should be scrupulously accurate. Bibliography in all its bearings is, no doubt, dry and uninviting; but it happens that it here and there rises to the dignity of literature, by helping us to settle a tiresome problem, and the figure of a date or a word may weightily tell.

Let me survey the field, as it stands, and try to satisfy others, as well as myself, that this undertaking before me represents an unworked corner, and one eminently deserving the process.

Of the biography of Shakespear, pure and simple—the domestic *Fasti*, the indefatigable researches and speculations of successive ages have gradually collected as much as we are, perhaps, entitled to expect in the case of one who was, as we may put it, almost wilfully and ostentatiously indifferent to his own fame, of whom his contemporaries and immediate after-comers have so little to say, and by possibility knew so little, and who had the fortune to be connected in blood with persons whose illiteracy and religious prejudices were unfavourable to the pre-

servation of records of any kind. We have here, where such information and light might have been superlatively important and welcome, to face the disastrous consequences of the phenomenal apathy of the individual himself, succeeded and complemented by the distaste of his family for the pursuit and the monuments of it, which they were incapable of regarding with more than tolerance while the poet lived, and which they almost undoubtedly did their part in committing to oblivion when he was no more. If the wife and the daughters, and the Halls, and the Quineys, had been told that in the works of the butcher's son of Stratford-on-Avon the world would learn to recognise an *ipso facto* title to the first place among playwrights, among literary men, among English-speaking folk everywhere, and that from those pages the most religious might come away uncontaminated, these excellent provincial worthies would have been totally incredulous.

The critical acumen of the best judges of poetry in the course of a century and a half has exhausted itself in illustrating and emphasizing the intrinsic value and beauty of the plays and the unique genius of the author; and, since he laid down his pen, others without number have busied themselves with the ambitious endeavour to merit the praise of creating something even distantly and faintly resembling these masterpieces.

Again, by a slow and tedious course of patient and scholarly investigation, the texts of the dramatic series (for the poems occupy different ground) have been raised to a standard of comparative purity, leaving undone only what appears to defy conjecture, or what has here and there been rather unaccountably

overlooked ; and the outcome, considering the almost desperate condition of numerous passages, is apt to strike us with astonishment, while it impresses us with profound gratitude. Shakespear was gravely unjust to himself in leaving to posterity such an editorial trust, when it is borne in mind that it was in his own power to rectify at a glance typographical blunders or copyists' misreadings, which, under the most auspicious circumstances, we can only hope that we have set right. Yet his labours have not descended to posterity in a much more corrupt state than those of many inferior masters, who have demanded and obtained at our hands a similar votive office.

But there is, beyond these points of view, another aspect of this really national question, which has so far been lightly and insufficiently handled ; and one is the less surprized at such an omission or shortcoming, when one perceives that so many literal or textual emendations of the poet, not less vital than (when they have been advanced) obvious, are of comparatively recent date, while others remain in the background, awaiting introduction and acceptance.

The world of letters and culture is under very weighty obligations to the late Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, who spared neither labour nor expense in laying before us all, for our use and enjoyment, the entire known *corpus* of documentary material illustrative of the great writer, whom he made his life-study. Had it not been for him, in combination with a few others, who limited themselves to the authentic papers and particulars extant or discoverable, no account of the life and works of Shakespear would at the present moment be practicable ; and it was to this

source that Mr. Lee was almost exclusively indebted for the means of rendering his biography as complete and consecutive as it is. Mr. Lee has, in fact, thrown into a readable form, with a certain amount of collateral aid from other quarters, the text of the *Outlines* in their fullest development (or seventh edition); and, allowing that he has here and there obtained assistance from independent authorities, it is not unjust to this gentleman to affirm that, had it not been for the generous perseverance of Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, the *Life of Shakespear* by Mr. Lee could not have been even what we see it. As it is, the work is imperfect and inaccurate enough; and even where Mr. Lee had the advantage of his predecessor's volumes at his elbow, he has not always translated their sense quite correctly or faithfully; nor has he by any means fully profited by the opportunity supplied by other readily accessible stores of information.

Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps was never quite true to himself, partly from the necessity of printing his material as he accumulated it, and partly from the absence of an aptitude or taste for methodical arrangement; and Mr. Lee is a distinct gainer by the constant difficulty, even with the help of an index, in finding any given information in the *Outlines*.

The conditions involved in the domestic arrangements of the poet during the greater and better part of his life, although they may be thought to possess no interest so long after the event, will be shown by me to have exerted a large measure of influence on his literary progress and history, and are, at any rate, nearly as unique as himself. We know that during a certain time his brother Edmund was an actor in London, where he died and was

buried in 1607. We know that another brother, Gilbert, pursued in some way and for some time the business of a haberdasher or dealer in small wares in the metropolis, and returned home, destined to survive all his immediate kindred. We also know that Stratford friends periodically visited London, and saw the poet there. We have a tradition that he went down into Warwickshire once a year; and there may be said to be positive testimony that he was in Stratford at irregular intervals. But there is absolutely no suggestion that his father or mother, wife or daughters, ever quitted their native county, that they cast eyes on any of the distinguished friends whom he had collected round him, save perhaps Jonson and Drayton; that they were spectators at any performance where he was both author and actor, or that they perused a single production of his mighty pen. It must be allowed that, if the present is a commonplace, it is an eminently human aspect of the question.

There are perhaps more volumes by Shakespear, certainly relating to him, at the present moment in one or two public repositories in Stratford than the town ever possessed in the time of the poet and his immediate descendants. No name of a book-collector belonging to the place or the vicinity, except the Lucys, has come down to us. In a literary respect it was a sterile soil with a single exception—that a signal one.

The rather extensive series recognized as Shakespear Allusion-Books must not be dismissed as without their value, nor are they valueless. Yet the majority of them are strangely uninforming and uncritical. Of compliment they are lavish enough, but it is a sort of praise which fails to discriminate; and with

the fewest possible exceptions we find Shakespear grouped with other writers, between whom and himself the distance has by this time grown immeasurable. It is mainly on the notices of him and his works during his life that we should lay stress, and Meres in 1598, and Thorpe in 1609, are the only two panegyrists falling within that category; for Jonson, Davenant, Milton, and Dryden did not give expression to their sentiments till the poet was no more, and the two latter, till the perspective began to lengthen, and his intellectual relation to other authors could be more impartially discussed. The lines by Jonson, which accompany the folio of 1623, are friendly—even flattering; but do they amount to a just appreciation? They hardly go farther than to permit us to presume that Jonson placed Shakespear above Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe; but even then there is a pervading element of vague and disproportionate eulogy. Lyly and Kyd stood at a much lower level than Marlowe, and neither was well susceptible of being compared with the other, while the collocation of Marlowe with Shakespear was by no means unfair and improper, if we look at the work executed by him at the time of his premature death and that ostensibly or otherwise so far produced by the Stratford poet. Nor is it in the least degree problematical, when we observe the advance made by Marlowe between the composition of *Dido* and that of *Edward II.*, that, had he been spared, he would of all the Elizabethan poets have most nearly approached the author of *Hamlet*. He died, like Randolph at a later date, in his twenty-ninth year; he was Shakespear's junior by a twelvemonth; and these three, weighing all the

circumstances, take the lead among the writers of the Elizabethan and Stuart eras.

The Allusion-Books easily and obviously divide themselves into those which belong to the life-time of the poet and those which cover the posthumous period down to the close of the seventeenth century. Of the latter group, exceedingly few are of any real pertinence or interest ; but we have to except very emphatically the notices by Davenant in 1638, by Milton in 1645, and by Dryden in 1668. The rest are eulogistic enough, but trivial, sometimes to the point of neutrality. They have received attention—far more than they merit—from the universal and indiscreet ardour which seizes on every scrap of print or MS. bearing the magical name. I need dwell on them no farther, since they are all reverentially preserved in a volume, which I would rather not have. The most essential memorials of this class are to be read in the *Outlines* ; and it is due to Davenant ever to keep in mind that it is believed to have been, partly at least, to his inspiration that Dryden owed his views about Shakespear.

The posthumous mentions, as a rule, are assuredly of the most subordinate moment. They merely establish, if they do so much, the survival, in a few special directions, of the memory of the poet and his dramatic, rather than his lyrical writings ; and we perceive that in every instance the resurrection of the name imports a text of the original author adapted to a later and not improved taste. There is, however, a passage in the dedication by Mrs. Behn to Lord Worcester of her *Emperor of the Moon*, 1687, which may seem to look back regretfully at the

old Elizabethan theatre ; for the writer observes that it was the admirable work of Shakespear, Fletcher, and Jonson, which formerly enabled the town to keep so many houses open. This utterance, however, is rather *per se* and exceptional, for the excellent caterers for the stage in the post-Shakespearian era deemed the work of the earlier masters, as a rule, only admissible and likely to succeed, when they had reduced it to their own level or standard.

In an edition of Webster's *White Devil*, 1672, the writer of the preface commends in succession Chapman, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and then proceeds to speak of the *right happy and copious industry* of Mr. Shakespear, Mr. Dekker, and Mr. Heywood ; and in the *Athenian Mercury* for 1691, we read : " Father Jonson was excellent at Humour, Shakespear deserves the name of Sweetest which Milton gave him "—and so on. In short, our poet merely forms one of a group, not the foremost figure ; and such passages are susceptible, if it were worth while, of multiplication.

The contention that the interest in Shakespear and his work remained very languid and partial during the remainder of the century which witnessed the close of his life, and during the first half of the next one, is not impaired, I think, by occasional visits to Stratford by persons who happened to be travelling in the county on pleasure or business, and the notice by them of the monument in the church, as the birthplace and the actual dwelling do not seem to have excited any curiosity or attention. In short, with the fewest possible exceptions, and those confined to a period when the poet was living and in the full enjoyment

of his reputation, the references in printed books and MSS. singularly coincide in their deplorable and irritating ineptitude. It is probably hopeless to prevail on that excellent example of mental obliquity, the mere collector, to take this view; he is not to be reasoned with.

The extremely well-known publication, entitled *Shakespear's Library*, which was re-edited in an improved and amplified form, five-and-twenty years since, by the present writer, is usually treated as a sort of repertory or magazine, whence the dramatist derived in large measure his plots and incidents, if not his inspiration and cues. The six volumes, of which the later and better impression of this collection consists, are not uncommonly supposed to place the reader and student in the track of the greater part of Shakespear's prototypes and *prima stamina*, and to enable them to judge his varying degrees of obligation and his unquestionable triumph over his originals. The function of the last editor of this certainly interesting and instructive miscellany was absolutely limited to the revival, in an enlarged and revised shape, of a book produced in 1843 or 1844 by the late Mr. John Payne Collier, and it scarcely entered into his plan to challenge the validity of the notion from a critical standpoint. Placing oneself, however, between *Shakespear's Library* and *Shakespear's Plays*, and exercising a not very arduous or lengthened amount of comparative analysis, one arrives at the fairly confident, and perhaps not unwelcome, conclusion, that our national poet was to his hypothetical shelf of works of reference, to the book-case which we have filled on his behalf, an insignificant debtor. Shakespear was assuredly by no means unwilling to avail himself of sugges-

tions, as well as of all the advantage which an existing outline or skeleton confers ; but he met, so far as our present knowledge enables us to form an opinion, with little enough in print or in manuscript, when he started as a writer for the stage, fit for use in his estimation till it had undergone not merely recension, but an almost thorough metamorphosis.

Shakespear had before him, when he conceived the design of adding himself to an already numerous circle of caterers for the theatres, several productions, which had been already dramatized, and had met with success and applause. Of these, some have been handed down to us ; others, such as the old *Hamlet* and the *Few of Venice*, have seemingly disappeared. But the coming master had them all, and even more than we know by report, under his eyes and at his disposal, and was superior to the modern necessity of classifying this body of matter into existing remains and lost evidences, of which the latter have their tantalizing side, not to be altogether dislodged by arguing from the known to the unknown.

The estimation of the poet by those who lived in or about his time, was warped or straitened by the absence of perspective and the deficiency of proper facilities for critical comparison ; and it was necessarily disproportionate. There are still among us such as regard and describe him as *a clever man*—one of the most hateful and ridiculous of misnomers ; and if the very term was not in use, the majority entertained during his lifetime an opinion not very dissimilar. For if a person of the observant and experienced mind of Jonson—an intimate friend and a professed admirer—had the power to see so little more, is it remarkable that readers

in general should have been qualified to measure the great master ? Whatever eulogy we find bestowed on him, we find equally bestowed on others ; and how newly is it, that even the more discerning have readjusted old systems of precedence, and taught us to distinguish between schools of writing and orders of intellect ! The homage to genius of the most exalted type, the reparation of humanity for well-nigh two centuries of neglect—how modern ! how tardy ! The object of an almost idolatrous worship to all cultivated men and women everywhere has long left behind him that irrepassable bourn, which he descried, and has found the undiscovered country to which he pointed. *Nobis non nostra*. Shakespear left certain drachmas and a certain “space of dirt ” to his own by blood ; the rest, the richest, descended to unscheduled heirs, an unknown posterity, inseparable contemporaries :—

“ Thou hast into the dark still country cross’d,
And shaken off this life-long dream of pain :
And since thy most lov’d attributes remain,
Let us reflect how little we have lost.”

I notice that, long before Jonson pronounced his eulogium on his great friend, Thomas Thorpe, the stationer, applied to Shakespear, in the dedication to the *Sonnets*, 1609, the proud and far-sighted epithet of “ Our Ever-Living Poet ;” and there is something more to be said hereupon, inasmuch as the *editio princeps* of *Troilus and Cressida*, not only printed in the same year, but by the same typographer (George Eld), had, as an apparent afterthought, a preface attached to it, in which there is this significant passage :—“ And believe this, that when he is gone, and his Comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set

up a new English Inquisition." The address is superscribed : "A Never Writer to an Ever Reader, News ;" and I affirm that that "never writer" was no other than Thorpe.

There is the other side of the picture, the contemporary aspect of the question, the views of the person most immediately and nearly concerned included. I do not contemplate, at the moment, the perpetuity of fame, or the unapproached pre-eminence of intellect which it has asked centuries to discover and concede ; but, considering Shakespear in relation to his time, his self-appraisement, and that practical success, to which there was so evident a side-look through all the later life : considering that, when the antecedent school of dramatic poetry had disappeared, he was without a rival during so many years, an object of marked attention to his sovereign, on terms of personal acquaintance with members of her Court, in even higher favour with her successor and the new Stuart regime, and the winner of panegyrics from some of his fellows, who would have challenged his supremacy, had it been in their power : all this was realizable by the individual who had fixed himself in London in 1587, and found himself a man of fortune ten years after, successful in all his enterprises saving one—his marriage.

When we take in our hands the complete dramatic compositions of Shakespear, and peruse them at our leisure, we too rarely pause to reflect on the conditions under which they were originally and severally given, not always even to the press, but to the theatre and to the theatre-going public. We too often fail to appreciate the search for a theme or a story likely to prove popular, the hours of toil and thought while the selected topic

was in hand, the arrangements as to its presentation on the stage, the fixture of the cast, and the anxious moments, till the verdict of the audience was delivered.

The profound originality and individuality of the great poet considered, there has perhaps never been in dramatic annals or experience one who less depended on his own unassisted invention, or who to a more complete extent laid under tribute the imperfect, yet suggestive and serviceable, labours of predecessors. Shakespear approached the sphere of literary activity, which he was to make his career, at a juncture when several of his countrymen, whose education and culture might be said to excel his own, who had been bred at universities, and who had profited by foreign travel, were in possession of the stage, and were familiar to the public ear.

More than sufficient, perhaps, has been elsewhere said of the *Sonnets* and their history, as well as of the two lyrical poems which had preceded them. Those writers who had anticipated the author in the same species of composition were evidently studied by him, on the identical principle pursued in the plays, and reflect in his pages thoughts and images reproduced with a difference. Shakespear did not scruple to appropriate material and to profit by suggestion, whether it came to him by word of mouth or from the book of a contemporary. Others acted by him with corresponding freedom, not corresponding success. Plagiarism and misascription were everywhere rife, and seem to have been generally tolerated. Even a man, whose dramatic writings and fame at all events were vital to him in a commercial sense, permitted others to attach his name or his initials to plays with

which he had no concern, and made no sign—none perceptible to us. That he disapproved of such practices we augur from his expression to Heywood of annoyance at the piracy of the rather notorious printer Jaggard in the case of the *Passionate Pilgrim*. But then Heywood had evidently broached the subject to him, and we are not told that he resented Jaggard's equally improper attribution to him in the first edition of that miscellany of poems by Richard Barnfield and others. Not the least edifying feature in this misappropriation is the side-light which it throws on the apparent want of touch with current books, even his own, evinced by the poet, for Heywood makes him observe that he was much offended with Master Jaggard "that presumed to make so bold with his name."

To the Plays, as well as to the Poems, we have to go in quest of elucidations, such as they are, of the poet's family history, his private emotions, and even his public views and political bias. Some passages, indeed, are so obviously autobiographical, that we are spared the pains of reading between the lines or being satisfied with an hypothesis. Nothing could be more natural, where the course of the drama afforded facilities for introducing as a normal human trait or incident something within his own knowledge—even something which had occurred under his own roof.

The prevailing impersonality of the plays, forestalling the counsel of the French novelist Flaubert to his pupil Maupassant, renders the few salient exceptions the more conspicuous. The lunge at the Puritans may perhaps be paired with that (in the *Merry Wives*) at Sir Thomas Lucy, which is even more direct, being aimed at an individual instead of a sect, but which, while it

is less bitter, is more contemptuous. The generalization and neutrality of the dramatist, as distinguished from the sonneteer, are well maintained, however, although there is in so many places liberty and power to draw conclusions.

With what feelings such a man must have contemplated the enormous accumulation, even down to his day, of books and objects in book-form: a deluge of dry goods garnered up in receptacles called Libraries—Libraries of men and libraries of bodies of men! He was by no means, one judges, a collector. He utilized, adapted, transformed whatever printed or oral material came to hand, but did not value the sources, where they were books, as possessions, when all the points had been noted. The Halls, who did not become actually extinct till the commencement of the nineteenth century (1806) would have kept at least some of his books. Even if the godly Mrs. Hall did not approve of *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*, there should have been a family Bible. The first folio of the Plays was a volume apt to lie without serious offence on an upper shelf. But, whether the signature in the Florio's Montaigne be genuine or not, the volume had found its way into the vicinity of Birmingham long before 1806; and the presumption is, that whatever there may have been in the nature of a book-closet at the poet's death in 1616, was more or less speedily scattered. The widow of Dr. Hall, in 1643, only offered to shew a visitor the MSS. of her deceased husband.

In the almost daily publication of news-sheets and pamphlets relative to foreign affairs on the one hand, and, on the other, in the continual chances of encountering in London persons who

had returned from the Continent and America, full of novel and startling intelligence, the dramatist found even a surfeit of channels for learning what was going on everywhere; and the incessant output of popular ephemerides, including those "ballads in print, which I love even too well," proved helpful in their way. Shakespear, in his absorption of every scrap calculated to fall into its place, is amusingly illustrated by his introduction into a dialogue of the stereotyped terms of an Elizabethan imprint: *Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum*, and, in another way, by his pressure into service, as a comparison, of "the face of an old Roman coin."

In a study of the private and literary life of Shakespear so much presents itself, which contradicts ordinary experience, that we almost grow accustomed to an inversion of the biographical annals of less superlatively gifted and less peculiarly minded persons. Shakespear must have held in his hands in the course of his life a very large number of books and pamphlets; but instead of retaining them, he almost undoubtedly cast away volumes or items of every kind—a ballad in print, to wit—when it had served its purpose, or he saw that it was incapable of serving one. Here he offered a diametrical contrast to the learned Jonson, who formed two successive libraries, and to Burton, who was a bibliomaniac; but Bacon, on the other hand, is not identified with any permanent collection of books. It would be possible, and it might prove interesting, to compile a list of works which there is fairly solid ground for believing that Shakespear had at some time or other under his eyes, and to which he was indebted for an outline, a scene, a hint, a name, or a phrase.

Such an inventory would place him in the position of a collector of a new and not the least wise type, and might assume larger proportions than the so-called *Shakespeare's Library*.

As the matter stands, there are only the first edition of Florio's Montaigne in the Museum, and the Latin Ovid of 1502 at Oxford, to stand sponsors for the rest, if others ever existed; and, again, both these volumes are held to be open to question. We have nothing to put in their room. Either the poet possessed no library, not even copies of his own works, or all has vanished. Among the serious responsibilities of his illiterate surroundings are the discouragement from the formation of a closet of books, no less than the destruction of such few as might have insensibly accumulated.

We possess in fee the inheritance, which he has left to us in common with the remainder of humanity, to be a happiness and an instruction to generations yet unborn. It might be ungracious to say that, had the precious gift been less ample, we should not perhaps have been much poorer or less sensible of the benefit conferred on us for ever; yet I express at least my own sentiments when I declare that I could have dispensed (save on biographical grounds) with all the lyrics, except the songs interspersed through the plays, and with certain of the plays, if it were not for a few redeeming passages. Nor would the rank of the poet have suffered, had he been known to us only as the writer of half-a-dozen or so of the dramatic series: *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, the *Merry Wives*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Tempest*.

The constitutional tendency to the humorous vein is men-

tioned and illustrated hereafter. But the finest and noblest compositions are the Tragedies, partly because they lend themselves to the higher flights of passion and sensibility; and Shakespear lived to divert into that channel the whole force of his intellect.

It cannot be too distinctly understood that the present enterprize does not assume to be more than the title suggests: an Essay, restricted to new points of view, which may or may not be held in certain instances to amount to new facts. But if some useful and interesting light is not shed by these pages on the excessively attractive and almost inexhaustible topic with which they deal, the error and blame are my own. There is the constant risk, while we are contemplating such a man, of hesitating to look at him, in his strictly human aspect and day-by-day life, as one of ourselves, and, again, of being discouraged from entertaining what might, in an ordinary case, be accepted as reasonable propositions; and the extent, to which we are forced to avail ourselves of collation, analogy, and suggestion, is responsible, on the contrary, for some hardihood in guesswork. It is often one guesser against another. The chronic obscurity and fragmentary survival of information may be exemplified by the accidental occurrence of the name of Thomas Greene in 1608, by the complete loss of trace of him till 1614, his subsequent disappearance, and our inability to determine what his precise consanguinity with the poet was. At the same time the concentration of scattered points and hints has already contributed to amplify our resources in this direction, and I am far from being without hope that such a process may, in the absence of more direct help, accomplish in the future yet more.

The Notes at the end are little more than samples. The modern editions, including the Globe and Clarendon Press one-volume issues, are disgracefully executed in an editorial sense.

The increased attention in America to everything tending to elucidate the life and character of Shakespear may tend to invest the undertaking with a share of importance and value in the eyes of Transatlantic students.

CHAPTER I.

Position of a Butcher in the time of Elizabeth. Common error as to old English commercial life. Parallel cases of Michael Drayton, Benjamin Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, Anthony Munday, Daniel Defoe. John Shakespear and Griffin ap-Roberts. William Shakespear and Griffin's son, early acquaintances. Sources of information on Shakespear's London. Utilization of youthful years in the country for the storage of experience and observation of types of life. Material for the comic and farcical elements in the Plays collected in Stratford and the vicinity. Falstaff. Practice of rehearsing plays performed in barns or the open air. Shakespear's marriage. The question of Handfasting discussed. A new witness introduced. The poet's own look-back on his marriage in later life. Sunday-weddings. The early journeys on horseback. Lameness. Visits to the metropolis. No fixed prospect. The deer-stealing legend.

THE circumstance that so many distinguished Englishmen have been described by their biographers as butchers or butchers' sons in early times renders it necessary to consider the difference between the professional, if not social, status of members of this calling in the sixteenth or even seventeenth century and the present day. Unfortunately far less ample information is forthcoming in regard to the functions and rank of the butcher of antecedent eras than we possess concerning those of many other crafts and craft-gilds, and such a deficiency of material largely proceeds from the loss of archives by fire and other causes. The older muniments of the Butchers' Gild in London have almost without exception perished; one pertinent fact is, that a freeman of it by patrimony, without being an operative member even so much as the father of the poet, was Daniel, son of James Foe. Of an analogous one in many of our provincial towns, even in places of importance, the authorities have little or nothing to tell

us; and, to come to the more immediate point, there seems to be no vestige of any fraternity of the kind at Stratford-on-Avon or at Warwick itself. The explanation may be sought in the restricted call during the Elizabethan period for the commodities normally supplied by the butcher in such a place as Stratford; and the same reason is perhaps susceptible of being given for the ostensible practice on the part of John Shakespear of combining with his supposed business as a butcher not only that of a grazier, but that of a glover or even a shoemaker, since, so far as the two latter employments go, such articles were commonly manufactured of neat's leather, often not too skilfully or carefully dressed, judging from the great Bacon's reported dislike to the smell, and prohibition of its use by his own body-servants.

John Shakespear may have been at once a grazier, a butcher, a skinner, a tanner, a glover, a cordwainer, or, in other words, he may have superintended the successive stages, and have taken the profits of each and all. Whatever the precise range of his occupation was, the result, as we hear, was not unattended by vicissitudes. The father of the poet, whom we somewhat indistinctly realize as a multifarious, and for a certain length of time successful, trader, possibly tried to grasp too much, and toward the date, when his son was just beginning to earn a name and an income, he was under a rather dark cloud.

Drayton was equally a Warwickshire man and a butcher's son; but he seems to have been lifted at a very early age out of the immediate environment of his birthplace, and we do not know whether his father was a man of the same type as the elder Shakespear, or a butcher in the sense that the father of Keats was. A parallel illustration of the error apt to arise from failing to distinguish between ancient and modern commercial life exists in the case of Jonson, whose stepfather is described as a bricklayer, and who is represented as seeking to induce his young relative to carry a hod with as large an amount of truth or even probability as the silly tale transmitted to us by Aubrey of young Shakespear

and the calf. Mrs. Jonson's second husband was doubtless of the Bricklayers' Gild, not an artizan; and Dyce perpetrates, I conceive, a similar error in referring to Anthony Munday as *a draper*.* But it was John Benson of Westminster, described as a bricklayer, who drew the plan for Alleyn of Dulwich College, and executed the brickwork, that is, superintended it,† as Mr. Burridge did at Goldsmiths' Hall after the Fire of 1666,‡ and such examples might be readily multiplied.

A yet more striking disproof of the common notion on this subject may be said to lie in the biography of Christopher Marlowe, who has been almost contemptuously described as the son of a shoemaker at Canterbury, yet whose father was a member of the Cordwainers' and Tanners' Gild there, and a man occupying a good social position in the city.

Returning to Stratford, we encounter a piece of testimony bearing by more than possibility on the experiments made by the elder Shakespear in the direction of fixing his son in a calling. A certain Griffin ap-Roberts resided at Stratford in those days, and belonged to the same trade and commercial brotherhood as the poet's father. Aubrey alleges that Nicholas ap-Roberts, son of Griffin, was a youthful acquaintance of Shakespear. The question has been mooted, whether there was a scheme which failed, for bringing up the latter to the paternal business by apprenticing him to Roberts; and while the statements of Aubrey are not unfrequently loose and inexact, there is such a form of danger as unreasoning and misplaced scepticism. For the years, which would be represented and covered by a trial of this sort, even by more than one, are enveloped in absolute darkness only exceeded by that which surrounds his transactions and

* Reprint of *Kempe's Nine Daies Wonder*, 1840, p. 32. The letter of Henslowe to Alleyn, 26th September, 1598, referring to Jonson as a bricklayer, is doubtless a forgery.

† Brayley and Britton's *Surrey*, iii., 220.

‡ Hazlitt's *Livery Companies*, 1892, p. 650.

progress in London, when a local career had been relinquished, and before any thoroughly distinct personal footprints in connection with theatrical affairs can be identified. That he should have yielded to the wishes of his father in the first instance, and have taken articles under Roberts the butcher, arguably another member of a local gild, is therefore decidedly plausible enough, and there is the farther likelihood that, whatever the precise facts may have been in regard to the Lucy episode, and the measure of the Knight's resentment at the time, that event constituted the turning-point in what must be treated as in some respects the most important of all English careers.

The ap-Roberts episode, bringing the father of Shakespear and the elder ap-Roberts before us, as on a footing of special friendliness, and the youthful Shakespear himself as an associate of Nicholas ap-Roberts, lends force to the surmise, that of the various employments assigned to John Shakespear that of a butcher of the Elizabethan type was the central one, and the others subsidiary.

An introduction to a more rational appreciation of Shakespear's life in London, when he finally relinquished Stratford as a home, and denied himself the sight of a young wife and three children of tender age, to enter on a meteoric course of thirty years unparalleled in human history, is a study of the poet's London, a consideration of what London was in 1587, of what its institutions were, and what its topographical costume was. Much of this sort of learning is to be gathered from Stow, Harrison's *Description of England*, and other works of reference. The early training of the young Warwickshire settler was primarily rural. He was at home in all the amusements and pursuits of the country, and his experience was not to be thrown away. He utilized his familiarity with horses in his first published literary essay—*Venus and Adonis*; but it was a class of acquirement, which was mainly calculated for subsidiary purposes or incidental illustration. Upon this young man of four and

twenty was laid the function of proving that he had within him a power to which all those hoards of provincial lore would stand in the relation of humble accessories.

Having been born in 1564, Shakespear did not settle in London till he was two or three and twenty. There was an ample interval for much in the way of adventure and misadventure for a youth in the fullest enjoyment of health and energy, discharging commissions for his father in different directions, or bent on sport and pleasure. He was neither better nor worse than his comrades at and round Stratford, and could have told us a little, that we are never to know. It is thus with most of us; but few live to store up such incidents, and to render them part of the national property by selection and refinement, as Shakespear did in certain passages of his Sonnets and other Poems, and in the comic parts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, and other pieces. He gave the audience all that he deemed it likely that it would care to hear. He has permitted us to witness bucolic scenes, which were familiar to him, *exceptis excipiendis*. Whence he drew the inimitable Falstaff, it is not so easy to decide. He impresses one as an ideal creation or some model, encountered by the poet in his travels or rambles, enlarged and enriched to produce the masterly and overcoming presentment, which is before us, and which the actual original might have barely recognized. For there was of course a germ, on which this superstructure was erected, as a tattooed skull is said to have been the basis of the Gothic architecture. Shakespear runs prodigally and unctuously riot over this miracle of bulk, and heaps on the huge and jocund knight a pitiless avalanche of expletives, almost as if his pen had broken away from his control. When he cast his eye on the completed passage and picture, he must have chuckled over his own stupendous volley of ludicrous objurgation, his felicitous and exhaustive *tour de force*, that *cornucopiæ* of wicked raillery, that whole calendar of vituperative nomenclature.

The rich comic scenes in some of the earlier plays, and the presence of a low comic vein, almost descending to farce, in the induction to the *Taming of a Shrew*, and the interlude dropped into the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where it divides with the fairies the attention of the audience and the reader, are to be traced to the ill-dated interval between the childhood of the poet and his search of a career in London (1574-86). From three independent sources and quarters—Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, and Suffolk*—we gather that there was a practice, as early as 1526, of performing stage plays in the country, either in market-towns or elsewhere, and that these spectacles were of a varied character—allegorical, moral, and humorous. Companies from the metropolis sometimes exhibited them; sometimes they were arranged on the spot with appliances of a very rudimentary kind. Considering that biographers have to account for a full dozen years of Shakespear's youth, during which his intervals of leisure were considerable, it is really not too much to suppose that he was an occasional spectator at these entertainments, and that, while they tended to form his taste, they lingered in a tenacious memory, till the unforeseen opportunity presented itself of turning such recollections to substantial and advantageous account. If a boy like Willis of Gloucester could recall at seventy-five the *Cradle of Security*, which he had seen so long before, as if it had been a perfectly recent occurrence, Shakespear is far likelier to have treasured up these juvenile experiences. He clung to them only too fondly; as he said of a ballad in print, he loved them only too well; and forsooth there are cases, where even in his ripe dramatic work this first schooling, as I take it to have been, has exerted a pernicious influence. He carried throughout his professional course too pronounced a leaning to farce and fun—those of the rustics, whom he had had under his eyes, whom he may have helped to learn their parts, of whom he

* *Manual of Old English Plays*, 1892, v. *Cradle of Security*; *A. C. Mery Talys*, 1526, repr. 1887, fol. 1; Rowe's *Tragi-Comædia*, 1653.

may have perchance now and again made one. The purely rural presentations were almost necessarily selections or abridgments, which would demand a certain amount of judgment. In the Oxfordshire example, some countrymen from Stanton-Harcourt had rehearsed their parts during some time, and travelled to Witney, where the play (*Mucedorus*) was to be performed. There was an accident, which the writer of the account evidently ascribed to divine wrath. Here was a case, however, where a lengthened coaching was undertaken, doubtless under the eye of a comparative expert.

The disposition to connect this drama to a limited extent with Shakespear prompts the suggestion, that at a place, only twelve miles from Oxford, some adaptation of a piece thus associated with the poet may have been exhibited on prior occasions under his eye and with his assistance.

This local preparation for what was to come, reasonably as it may be allowed by analogy, assists in elucidating that otherwise rather unintelligible and rather incongruous element in some of the plays, to which I have called attention, and which has to be distinguished from the more appreciable humour of Falstaff. In his latest productions, the early influence of the country grows less perceptible, yet it does not entirely disappear.

I ascribe with some warrant and confidence to the period, antecedent to a final settlement in London in or about 1586, that practical and exact knowledge of country life and character, of which the fruit is alike visible in the Poems and Plays. His attendance on his father in his varied daily employments alone familiarized him with an immense store and diversity of rural experience; there was, besides, the incidental intercourse with agricultural relatives and neighbours; and the periodical journeys to and from London must have been helpful. Aubrey is of opinion that Shakespear and Jonson were equally indebted to this sort of study from the life; and one acquires the notion, that direct and ocular suggestion formed no insignificant part of the Stratford

writer's library—human documents more veracious than books. Yet outside the route between his home and the theatre of his labours, and the environs of London, I fail to trace the poet, as regards his travelling range beyond Windsor on the one side, and Kent and Sussex on the other. Within such limits, however, what an abundance of types and models! In the professional tour undertaken in 1597, he may well have seen Gad's Hill, Rochester, and the Cliffs of Dover, which have one and all contributed to illustrate his dramas. It is quite pertinent to the scene in *Lear*, to bear in mind that, three hundred years ago, that which we have christened *Shakespeare's Cliff* was much more perfect and much more precipitous than at present. It has since enormously suffered from erosion.

The Warwickshire Shakespears—at all events those of Snitterfield, from whom the dramatist is held to have sprung—appear to have been almost without an exception agriculturists. They were somewhat prone to litigation; and one of them, a Thomas of 1575, is represented as “a common forestaller and engrosser of barley, wheat and rye contrary to the statute, and an evil example of other subjects.” This is a sort of side-light for our use and consideration, when we look at the practical aspect of the character of the poet's father, a Snitterfield man, transmitted to that son, in whose absence such anecdotes would have had no permanent significance. There are those other bearings on the individual here most immediately concerned, that his traditional Snitterfield associations visibly influenced him in two different ways: when he became an investor, in putting his money into land and tithes, and in modelling certain features in his handwriting, so far as we can test it from his signature. The fac-similes supplied in the *Outlines* shew the family likeness in the form of some of the letters of the name. We hear adverse criticism on the caligraphy of the poet; but his style strikes us as an advance on that of his predecessors. It was, however, a clear evolution from it; and in his last efforts to transfer

his name to paper we detect a relapse from physical weakness to the paternal model.

Few, if any, Shakespearian students have probably taken the trouble to turn over the leaves of a quarto legal treatise, published in 1632 under the title of "The Laws' Resolution of Women's Rights." The contents indeed are dry and technical enough, although in one place the reader encounters a section, shewing under what restrictions "the Baron [*i.e.* the Husband] may beat his wife." But the sole interest of the book for my immediate purpose centres in the sections on *Sponsion* or Handfasting, namely, 1. Of Sponsion or first promising; 2. Of publike Sponsion; 3. *Of secret Sponsion*; and there are two other clauses bearing on the subject, which is of some considerable moment in relation to the matrimonial contract between the poet and his future or destined wife.

The first section cited commences thus: "The first promising and inception of Marriage is in two parts, either it is plaine, simple and naked, or confirmed and borne by giving of something: the first is, when a man and woman binde themselves simply by their word only to Contract Matrimonie hereafter: the second, when there is an oath made, or somewhat taken as an earnest or pledge betwixt them on both parts, or on one part, to be married hereafter." The writer proceeds to describe Public Sponsion: "This Sponsion (in which as it stands, is no full Contract of Matrimony, nor any more, saue only an obligation, or being bound in a sort to marry hereafter) may be publike or secret: publike, either by the parties themselves, present together, or by message or Letters when they be distant one from another: . . ." But perhaps the most pertinent part is the definition of secret sponsion:—"Those Sponsals which are made when a man is without witnesse, *Solus cum sola*, are called secret promising or desponsation, which though it be tolerated, when by liquid & plaine probation it may appear to the Judge, and there is not any lawfull impediment to hinder the Contract, yet it is so little esteemed of,

(vnlesse it be very manifest) that another promise publique made after it, shall be preferred and prevaile against it. . . ." It is added that the promise must be unconditional, and two or three years' grace was allowable, according to the place of residence of the proposed husband, before the woman was at liberty to seek another union. We find nothing here about rush rings and such abuses of confidence, nor is the earnest indicated in the text defined. Females might not betroth themselves under *seven* years of age ; at fourteen a woman was *hors du garde* for her body, not for her hand.

This brief excursus may be of some value as contributing to a knowledge of the ideas, which prevailed on the present point, when Shakespear plighted his faith to Agnes or Anne Hathaway. Whether the poet carried into practice his own apparent views as a writer in his private capacity and in his youth, it is hard to determine ; but in the *Winter's Tale* through Leontes he likens (Act 1, Scene 2) a wife, who admits familiarity before her troth-plight, to a flax-wench ; but then he allows the validity of troth-plight without formal matrimony. A second curious point is, that in the same play Antigonus vows, that he will not let his daughters reach their fourteenth year, lest they should breed bastards.

Altogether the present branch of the inquiry, dealing with Shakespear's ante-nuptial proceedings, is of no mean relevance to his personal history, as there can be slight hesitation in concluding that the daughter of Richard Hathaway was her lover's senior, that some degree of undue forestalment occurred, owing at all events in some measure to the mistress's sufferance, and that, as years elapsed, the retrospect became to the poet something of the judgment, which he has depicted in the first scene of the fourth act of the *Tempest*, when the end was not far distant, and the cup of bitterness had been drunk almost to the dregs.

Sunday was, as it yet remains, from economical or other

motives, a common day for the humbler sort of marriages, and was so in the country. The line in Shakespear :—

“ And kiss me, Kate, we will be married o’ Sunday,”

is admissible as applied to a rural celebration of matrimony ; but it is hardly so appropriate, where, in the *Famous Victories of Henry V.*, 1598 (but written earlier), the anonymous writer makes the English prince fix his union with the French monarch’s daughter for the Sabbath—a passage, which does not recur in the Shakespear play. Were the poet and Anne Hathaway united on a Sunday ? The ceremony did not take place, of course, at Stratford, and no entry of the event has been discovered.

In the historical plays, which he revised with an unequal measure of completeness and care, the incongruities similar to that just noted in the *Famous Victories* are not unfrequent. In the *Second Part of Henry VI.*, Act 2, Scene 3, for instance, Queen Margaret is made to say to Gloucester :—“ thy sale of offices, . . . would make thee quickly *hop* without thy head,” and just below the Duchess of Gloucester exclaims :—

“ Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I’d set my ten commandments in your face.”

the parallel is so far admissible, that the writer has in either case transferred to the highest life the manners of the lowest.

More immediately in relation to Sunday weddings, there is the remark of Benedick upon the proposed marriage of Claudio : “ Go to, i’ faith : an’ thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it, and sigh away Sundays.”

Shakespear presumably passed the whole of his unmarried career under the paternal roof, of which every pilgrim to Stratford has the opportunity of realizing for himself, within a few points, the contemporary aspect and capacity ; it is apt to impress one with the notion of being humble and contracted for such a family as that of the father, especially where the tenant was a person of some local eminence. There, however, we are to conclude that

nearly twenty years of the poet's life were spent with his parents and his brothers and sisters ; there is no precise account, no domestic clues even of the slenderest kind to assist us, save the warrantable inference that once, or possibly more than once, he visited London as a mere boy, and met with the Burbages and Tarlton the actor. Nor do the biographers throw the least light on his movements from 1582, when he was united to Anne Hathaway, to 1586, when he proceeded to London alone, to return only at intervals. Within those years, while a family was growing up, the young couple must have occupied separate premises in Stratford ; but their whereabouts and the entire domiciliary question from this time onward are irretrievably obscure ; and all that we distinguish of the early married days is an uncertain glimpse in the 143rd Sonnet, of a young mother setting down her babe to run after a chicken belonging to the establishment. It may or may not be a retrospection.

It is abundantly probable that the elder Shakespear entertained, as so many parents do, the idea and the prospect that his eldest son would join him in his business ; and had such been the case, the result might have been more favourable. Nor was John Shakespear perhaps more easily converted than other fathers to the belief that his representative and heir, in making a temporary motive for leaving Stratford the turning-point of his life and of a different career, was not guilty of a very rash and headstrong act. The players, who occasionally visited the Warwickshire town in their provincial tours, had exercised, it is extremely reasonable to infer, a strong fascination on the mind of a youth so constituted ; and when the deer-stealing trouble came, to London, not to a neighbouring place where he might have found a friendly asylum for a season, Shakespear at once proceeded, as to a centre, which, if my view be correct, he already knew, which had the advantage of being beyond the reach of country justices, and where even then there was the amplest scope for energy and talent. Mr. Sidney Lee places this momentous step in 1586, and states that

the youth probably trudged on foot the entire distance. I gather from casual, yet unmistakeable allusions, that he rode on horse-back ; but he may have made use of the waggons or the carts, which traversed the intermediate space, and carried both passengers and goods. What a different spectacle Stratford presented when he left or reached it ! Yet not more so than London.

That he employed a horse appears—if we are justified in drawing any definite conclusions from that mysterious work—from more than one passage in the *Sonnets*. Take the 50th :—

“How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek—my weary travel’s end—
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,
‘Thus far the miles are measur’d from thy friend,’
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,
As if by some instinct the wretch did know,
His rider lov’d not speed, being made from thee—”

In the next quatorzain we similarly have :—

“O, what excuse will my poor beast then find,
When swift extremity can seem but slow ?
Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind ;
In winged speed no motion shall I know—”

and, turning back to Sonnet 27, the writer says :—

“Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tir’d—”

which seems to bespeak the result of a journey, not on foot, but by the same medium, which is so distinctly indicated in the preceding quotations. One of the numberless cobwebs woven by the students of the *Sonnets* brings the poet before us as afflicted with lameness. It may not be too adventurous, considering the constant use of horses for travelling purposes, to ascribe the allusion to a temporary accident, of which the inconvenience was still sensible, when the particular stanza was committed to writing. A man is not usually viewed as lame, who is merely so during an interval under special circumstances.

We might take a passage in *As You Like It*, where the poet refers to the *false gallop* of verses as a piece of actual experience collected and stored up against use, and if we dared to go farther, we might be so hardy as to imagine that the treacherous step of his horse on some occasion led to a serious casualty. On the contrary, had the lameness been a natural and chronic feature, it was one which might have served the turn of Robert Greene, when he launched his diatribe in 1592, and could find nothing worse to say, than that Shakespear aspired to shew elder dramatists how their work should have been done, and in future to do it himself—this *Johannes Factotum*.

I have alluded above to the familiar deer-stealing case, to which the desertion by the poet of his home and family has been usually ascribed; and I have already furnished some evidence, as I take it to be, that that portion of the story, which treats this incident as the first experience of London, is totally erroneous. That some potent motive actuated the poet in leaving his native town, where he had responsibilities on the one hand and the means on the other of meeting them by carrying on his father's business, is undeniable; and it is not less likely that he may have been implicated singly or with others in certain irregularities in the direction of poaching. Nevertheless I apprehend that the traditional account of his flight from Stratford to avoid the resentment of Sir Thomas Lucy is very far from a statement of the real circumstances.

The Lucy of the *Second part of Henry IV.* and of the *Merry Wives* is evidently the same person, though drawn in the two dramas under different impressions and aspects. This gentleman, so fortuitously celebrated, was born in 1532, and was educated at home, it seems, by Fox the martyrologist, from whom he imbibed certain puritanical tendencies. Sir Thomas spent part of the year in Warwickshire at Charlcote—where, in his time, there was no deer park, only a chase and warren—and part in Gloucestershire. When we first encounter him in the earlier drama, he is introduced

as in Gloucestershire. He lost his wife in 1595-6, and he himself died in 1600. Fourteen years had elapsed between his death and the generally received date of the removal of Shakespear to London to evade the consequences of his reputed transgression.

In *Henry IV.* the delineation of the character of Shallow leaves on the mind the impression of a slightly eccentric, yet genial country squire of at least average parts. This piece is supposed to have been exhibited in 1597-8, during the life of Lucy; and it is surely a transfer to the boards and paper, which neither the Knight himself (for he had worn spurs since 1565-6) nor his friends could have failed to identify. But there is not the contemptuous reference to the family coat of arms, which appears in the *Merry Wives*, when Lucy was no more. At the same time, the personal traits of Shallow are reproduced in the latter, where we again meet with his trick of iteration, and in his pleasant natural vein he says to Page:—

“For though we be justices and doctors,
And Churchmen, yet we are
The sons of women, Master Page.”

For those who are inclined (as I am) to challenge the theory that Shakespear was driven from his home by the agency of Lucy, there are the considerations that the young Stratfordian had then already acquired some relish and capacity for theatrical exhibitions on a humble scale among his fellows, as well as from the companies which visited the neighbourhood, and that, as I have tried for the first time to establish, he went up to the Metropolis in or about 1586, not friendless, but, on the contrary, with a reasonable expectation of sympathy and support. I am simply dealing with the original motive for settlement in London, which experienced farther developments—took a turn and a shape perhaps scarcely anticipated by the adventurer.

The deer-stealing affair, whether it occurred or not, and whether, being a fact, it came under the magisterial cognizance of Lucy, could not have exerted a paramount influence over the

career of Shakespear. The sitter for the portrait of Shallow, at so considerable a distance of time from the momentous crisis in the poet's life, is not depicted with such marked severity as the puritan faction in *Twelfth Night*, which is the more remarkable, looking at Sir Thomas Lucy's religious views. Landowners and game-preservers, and those who own no land and have no game to preserve, have been immemorially on opposite sides. But at the same time it is instructive and even amusing to note the way in which the great mind became a storehouse for every sort of serviceable material, even the most trivial, laid up against the opportunity for use, as where, in the earlier part of the *Merry Wives*, in the scene between Shallow and Falstaff, the poet recollects something which, by more than possibility, had occurred years before to himself down in Warwickshire:—

“*Shallow*: Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broken open my lodge.

“*Falstaff*: *But not kissed your keeper's daughter.*”

CHAPTER II.

The Burbages and Richard Tarlton. Shakespear the servant of James Burbage. Shoreditch and Rochester. Robin Ostler presumed to have been Shakespear's predecessor under Burbage. Richard Tarlton the Yorick of Hamlet. The Poet's childish knowledge of him. Some account of Tarlton. Shakespear's abode in Southwark. His commencing career as an actor. His brother Gilber's testimony. Richard Burbage the actor. His intimacy with the Poet. Bishop Corbet's anecdote about one of his impersonations. Ninian Burbage.

I INSIST that he already in 1587 knew the Burbages and Tarlton. James Burbage, who had originally been a joiner, as then understood, was a tavern-keeper as well as a theatrical proprietor. In other words, he was what was recognized as a *hosteler*. Anyone wishful to learn the precise rank and functions of this large body of traders can do so by reference to the account in print of the Gilds of London.* The hosteler of the Elizabethan era was the landlord, possibly the owner, of a place of public entertainment, and parallel to the modern hotel-keeper; and it was his practice to delegate to an assistant the superintendence of the stables and hayloft, which formed, as they often at present do, an independent department. In days when posting was the sole and universal method of locomotion by land, the hosteler was therefore a far from unimportant personage, and the elder Burbage added to his income not inconsiderably from this collateral source. Few things could be more natural than the resort of Shakespear on his arrival in London to a man such as Burbage, or than the willingness of the latter to avail himself of the services of an individual who was able to prove his practical efficiency for taking over duties scarcely less onerous and responsible than those of the

* Hazlitt's *Livery Companies of London*, 1892, pp. 117—20.

master. On this ground, and in such an employment—a highly respectable one, demanding very special knowledge—the process of mental incubation seriously commenced, and a thoroughly new class of experiences was thrown open to Shakespear, comprising the run of his employer's theatre at vacant intervals. The purchase and sale of horses was among his occupations; and Smithfield was not very distant from Shoreditch. He must have frequently trodden or ridden the intermediate distance, and made himself conversant with "Smithfield bargains" and Smithfield sharpers. He recollected the latter, when he penned the well-known dialogue between Falstaff and Page in the second part of *Henry IV.* as to the whereabouts of Bardolph. Robson, in his *Choice of Change*, 1585, before the poet set foot in London as a permanence, had already warned his readers against Smithfield as a mart for horse-flesh; but perhaps the country-bred representative of Burbage was equal to most occasions. The early hosteler has, we very well know, disappeared; and his modern quasi-namesake signifies his inferior status by the surrender of the aspirate.

The dual calling of James Burbage serves us rather materially in two ways, for while it discloses the facilities which his auxiliary enjoyed for seeing the theatre, observing the machinery and costume of the stage, and forming the acquaintance of the actors, playwrights, and more or less habitual visitors, it equally disposes of the fable about Shakespear having acted in the capacity of a linkman; for not only did the frequenters of the Shoreditch theatre, who resided at any distance, necessarily come on horseback, but, owing to the dark state of the thoroughfares, links and lanterns were indispensable to enable the spectators to reach their home even on foot, especially in the winter; and the boys who discharged this duty probably belonged to Shakespear's department at the Burbage hostelry. But that the poet himself carried a link is as seriously unlikely as that he held gentlemen's horses. The entire error arises from a fundamental misconception of the former status of the hosteler, and of the relationship to him

of the controller of the stables and their appurtenances. The theory as to the arrangement between Burbage and Shakespear rests on the already existing acquaintance of the two, on the clear tradition that the latter discharged certain functions belonging to an inn in the first instance, and on the peculiar circumstance that Burbage united in his own person the hosteler and the theatrical proprietor. The very wide distance between the ancient hosteler and the modern ostler seems to have demanded an extraordinarily long time for its appreciation and (in this case) its moral.

But it is more than slightly important to recollect that in coming up to London Shakespear is not ascertained to have had any plan before him, or to have formed the least conception of ulterior and after-realised contingencies. There were exceedingly few passages in his life from first adolescence, which did not fructify in his plays and sonnets in some way or degree; and the experiences in Shoreditch seem to have been recollected, when he held his pen in his hand, writing the *First Part of Henry IV.*, where, in the first scene of the second act, there is that dialogue in the inn-yard at Rochester between the carriers, the ostler, Gadshill, and others. It is precisely on the lines of what must have been matter of daily discourse within the hearing of the young Warwickshire beginner, while he had to be content with secondary employment; and the feature of making such a house the haunt of footpads, who thus gained intelligence, as we perceive in the text, of travellers on the road with money or valuables, was not only true enough at that date, but continued to be so down to our own time. The incidence rendered all the environs of London itself unsafe after dark; and probably what was true of Rochester was once and long just as much so of Shoreditch. In this particular instance, however, the dramatist might have well had in his recent recollection the aspect of an inn at Rochester itself, since he, in 1597, not so long before the play was written, accompanied his fellows, as we have seen, in a professional tour

in Kent and Sussex, and probably took the city on the Medway in his route.

A glance at the place in Shakespear will satisfy any one that he uses the term *ostler* incidentally in a vague sort of way, and makes Prince Hall ask Falstaff if he takes him for one, when he proposes that he should assist the Knight to mount. But there can be no question as to the difference in the status between the Shakespearian hosteler or ostler and the more modern ostler or stable-man; and a confirmation of such a view lies in the remark of one of the carriers: "This house is turned upside down, since Robin Ostler died." Still more curiously, Robin, on whom the management of the baiting is here described as having depended, was the servant of James Burbage, whose place I apprehend that the poet was appointed to supply. So we have in the scene before us an actual leaf of Shakespearian biography. The ostler of the play was a responsible officer, whose death had occasioned a disturbance of the arrangements connected with the stables; and the poet stood on the ground, which it had once been his own fortune to occupy.

The identity of Richard Tarlton the actor with the Yorick of *Hamlet* was surmised by the present writer very long since, and more than once mentioned by him incidentally in print. Let me first transcribe the passage from the play:—

"1 *Clo.*: Here's a skull now; this skull has lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

Ham.: Whose was it?

1 *Clo.*: A whoreson mad fellow's it was; whose do you think it was?

Ham.: Nay, I know not.

1 *Clo.*: A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! a'poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir—this same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

Ham.: This?

1 *Clo.*: E'en that.

Ham.. Let me see [it.] Alas! poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio—a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; *he hath borne me on his back a thousand times*; and now how abhorred my imagination is! my gorge rises at

it. Here hung those lips *that I have kissed I know not how oft*. Where be your *gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment*, that were wont to set the table on a roar ?—”

Now, it is not the perfect conformity of the characteristics of Yorick with those of Tarlton, which merits attention, the single word *table* being read *theatre* ; but this valuable passage sheds, unless I err, a most important light on the biography of Shakespear. Let us consider. Tarlton died in 1588 ; in that year the dramatist was a lad of fifteen. He was of course young ; but does it seem reasonable to suppose that either Yorick or anyone else would carry such an one on his back, or continually kiss him ? What is the deduction ? Surely there can be only one—namely, that, when Shakespear came up to London about 1587 to seek his fortune, he did not come for the first time, and he came to a place, where he was known, and had friends. If this piece of testimony be worth anything, he had no occasion to hold horses and links, or run errands. An ordinary lad, in one of the old jest books, is made to reply to a person begging him to hold his horse, that, if it needs only one to do so, he can attend to the matter himself, as if this sort of employment was not much relished. But in 1587 let us bear in mind, that Shakespear was already three or four-and-twenty, and that Marlowe died at twenty-nine. I conceive myself perfectly justified in inferring that the original introduction of the poet to London took place about 1574, when he was a boy of ten.

It would be exceedingly interesting and important to ascertain, if in the *Hamlet*, which is construably indicated by Nash in 1589 (Preface to Greene’s *Menaphon*), the passage about Yorick already occurred. In 1602-3, when the earliest text known to us of the Shakespear play was committed to type, the death of Tarlton had happened fourteen or fifteen years. But in 1589 it was a quite recent occurrence. Yet 1589 is our earliest point of time fixable for the existence of a drama on the subject of Hamlet—a drama, which had ostensibly attracted a good deal of notice.

Tarlton having died in the autumn of 1588, such an allusion to him as presents itself in the play would be graceful, timely, and clear; and the terms, as they have come down to us, strike us as being perfectly Shakespearian. Is it permissible to conclude, in the absence of fuller proof, that the first *Hamlet* belongs to the interval between September, 1588, and the publication of *Mena-phon*? In 1588-9, Shakespear was about five-and-twenty. In the first cast of the drama, which he was not too young to have composed, he might have recalled an incident of his boyhood—of earlier visits to London.

Tarlton had been born about 1520, and was of course an elderly man, when Shakespear first met with him as a boy. There is no valid reason to question his ability to have produced the popular pieces coupled with his name during his lifetime, among which his *Tragical Treatises*, 1578, seems the most important; and it is a volume of Shakespearian interest, into which if they had had the opportunity of looking, the earlier editors of the poet might have found a precedent for the use of the curious phrase, "Thrasonical Clawback" which occurs in *Love's Labor's Lost*, 1598. Shakespear had cast his eye over the pamphlet of the acquaintance of his youth, and had not hesitated to borrow what he found suitable for one of his first independent dramatic essays—in this particular instance a mere striking expression.

But there is in the same play a second trace of the influence of the famous comedian, where Longueville and Katharine hold the dialogue on veal and calf—not a very witty or a very delicate one to our apprehension—if the anecdote* reported of Tarlton in one of the Ashmole MSS. be genuine. These equivoques pervade not only the dramatic series, but the entire range of our older literature.

When Shakespear undertook to treat the reign of Henry V. as a part of his historical series, he found a kind of groundwork:

* Hazlitt's *Shakespear Jest-Books*, 1864, 2nd Series, p. 253, 363.

in the *Famous Victories*, in which his old friend had acted somewhere about 1585; and the drama, as it was played by the Queen's Majesty's Players, was committed to the press in 1598, so as to be before the poet, when he was composing his own piece. It is not perhaps material that* the *Victories* was licensed in 1594, and possibly then published. Shakespear doubtless adopted the first copy, which came to hand.

It may be that Tarlton was, as an early MS. note in a copy of Spenser, 1611, seems to suggest, rather than to state, the "pleasant Willy" of the author of the *Faëry Queen*; but I feel that those who have urged such a proposition might have considerably fortified their argument or theory, if they had mentioned the circumstance that in 1578 Spenser gave or lent to Gabriel Harvey, his intimate friend, Scoggin, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Skelton's *Merry Tales*, and *The Fests of Howleglas*, on condition that he would read them; for this is almost tantamount to a knowledge that such humorous ephemerides were appreciable by the donor, and that he was the sort of man to relish Tarlton. This was an early period in Spenser's literary career, before even the *Shepherd's Calendar* had appeared.

Having, as is generally believed and admitted, then, taken employment of a provisional, yet by no means derogatory, class in 158-, and in 1592 having attained sufficient note to awaken the hostile animadversions of a dramatist of such standing and repute as Robert Greene, it is an almost peremptory inference that Shakespear did not long continue in the exercise of such mechanical duties as were involved in the superintendence of the Burbage mews, or even in attendance at the theatre itself in some subordinate capacity. As regards the latter, it was apt to be an employment less desirable than the other, and would only be

* As a play on this subject—probably the *Victories*—was, it appears, in course of performance at Henslowe's theatre as late as Nov. 28, 1595, the publication may have been stayed. See Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines*, 6th ed. ii., 330.

tolerated as a stepping-stone. Anyhow, in less than five years from his arrival on horseback in Shoreditch, Shakespear had manifestly risen to an enviable rank as a playwright, or at least as a corrector of other men's MSS. It was wonderfully rapid progress, and denotes a faculty which bore down all opposition and detraction.

Edward Alleyn is our authority for believing that in 1596 Shakespear had quarters near the Bear Garden in Southwark. It was in this year that his old friend Burbage built the Blackfriars Theatre, and involved himself in financial embarrassments of long duration, and the neighbourhood of the Bear Garden on the opposite side of the river might have proved fairly convenient. All this neighbourhood was then pleasantly open, with rural surroundings reminiscent of home. But a person of the Poet's names was assessed in 1598, in the parish of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate.

The antecedent vocation of Burbage as a master-joiner qualified him to undertake, according to the practice of those days,* an appreciable portion of the skilled labour connected with the structure of a building, and if he did not personally execute the joiners' work, he was in a position to direct it, not improbably retaining his membership of the Joiners' Gild, and was perhaps induced by his experience to embark in the new enterprize. He even appears to have built certain houses adjacent to the play-house—the *Curtain* or *Theatre* (so called *par excellence* as the earliest edifice of the kind seen in London); and these and the hostelry and stables, also contiguous, were presumably planned under his eye.

The theatre in Shoreditch, where Shakespear undoubtedly started on his great career, dated from 1576; that is to say, it had been ten years or thereabout in existence when the Stratford adventurer arrived in London to seek a livelihood, uncertain as to anything ulterior. During his entire professional life he remained steadfast to the Burbages, and when James Burbage died in 1597,

* Hazlitt's *Livery Companies*, 1892, p. 545.

he associated himself with the sons, particularly Richard, the foremost actor of his day; and in 1598-9, as a climax to a dispute respecting the lease of the Shoreditch property, part of the materials was transported to the Bankside by Richard and Cuthbert Burbage for utilization in their new venture, which became known as the Globe, and was the scene of most of Shakespear's later achievements as a maker of plays and an actor in them. The transfer of portions of the actual Shoreditch house elsewhere again points to the technical training of the Burbages; but when the father is merely introduced to us as having been a joiner, we do not immediately realize his position and attainments, and have to discover the wide difference between an Elizabethan craftsman of that denomination and his modern namesake. This is a rock on which we are constantly apt to run aground.

Alone in London, a husband and a father, without the consolation and stimulus, which the sympathy of the home yields; among those who were inadequately sensible or immoderately jealous of his rising fame and earnings: Shakespear, beyond a question, must have experienced fits of despondency, which he suffered to find reflection in those Sonnets, with which he began to beguile his leisure moments about the same period, which witnessed the issue of the two volumes of verse in 1593 and 1594. It lends something to his ancestral pretensions, that, whatever success might attend his career as a professional performer in any piece accepted by his theatre, he had at first, at any rate, an instinctive repugnance to the call; and such a prejudice was more likely to exist, so long as his practical experience disqualified him from filling prominent parts. The distaste lessened, perhaps, in the exact ratio of the decreasing need for any work of the kind; and when the sonnets, bewailing his lot, appeared in 1609, they had survived their original significance as a more or less sincere profession at least fifteen years.

How long it was, before Shakespear attained any sort of competence and self-possession as a performer, and the exact

estimation of him in that capacity, our knowledge is limited to two or three casual anecdotes, which do not point to the display of first-rate powers in this direction. Nor do we learn, when the commencement of the attempt to fill parts in his own and other men's plays occurred. The twenty-third sonnet opens with a simile borrowed, perhaps, from painful recollection :—

“ As an imperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put beside his part—”

And the 110th is redolent of discontent at having derogated from his social position by adopting the vocation of a player :—

“ Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view—”

Which argues a regular, if not a prolonged, practical experience of the stage, which qualified success might render additionally unacceptable.

The two cardinal points, however, on which Shakespear insisted, and in respect to which, outside his private concerns, he has shown himself willing to depart from that strange neutral or passive attitude toward his undoubted rights and interests, centred in his status as an actor and part-proprietor ; and here accordingly we find his name more than once in a list of memorialists to the authorities for indulgence or redress. I hardly know the full facts respecting the pretensions of the dramatist as a performer. In 1603, Davies of Hereford, in his *Microcosmus*, brackets him with the younger Burbage as one of the best at that time ; and Davies does not name or indicate Alleyn. Recollect that it was in that very year that he almost certainly took a part in *Love's Labor's Lost* at Southampton House. Aubrey informs us that one of Shakespear's brothers—Gilbert the haberdasher—referred in later life to having seen the dramatist play the part of Adam in *As You Like It*. As the same authority states that this gentleman *often* visited London, and that the anecdote was repeated by him, when he was an old man, the story can apply only to Gilbert Shakespear, who survived all his immediate

relatives—even his son, and might have been alive within the memory of many, when Aubrey wrote.

Richard Burbage, who survived till 1619, dying on Saturday, March 13, 1618-19, in Lent, was, no doubt, a greater actor than the man, whose works he so importantly contributed to illustrate by his histrionic gifts. He took the leading parts in *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Othello*, and played Hieronimo in Kyd's piece of that name. From the pen of a contemporary play-goer we obtain an almost unique glimpse of him, as he trod the boards at the Globe. After reciting some of the characters which he portrayed, as above mentioned, the writer proceeds to say :—

“ Oft have I seen him leap into the grave,
Smiting the person which he seem'd to have
Of a sad lover, with so true an eye,
That there I would have sworn he meant to die ;
Oft have I seen him play this part in jest
So lively, that spectators and the rest
Of his sad crew, whilst he but seemed to bleed,
Amaz'd, thought even then he died indeed—”

It seems to the present writer that a very peculiar interest is attached to the Burbage family, and to this member of it in particular, inasmuch as he was during so long a course of years face to face with Shakespeare, and was his first great interpreter. The author had possibly not seen him in *Richard III.*, which is so far remarkable, that it was one of his most striking studies—one, with which he, according to the story, thoroughly imbued himself.

At the period of the decease of the younger Burbage, Richard Corbet, afterward a bishop, but better and more deservedly known as a writer of some creditable verse, and as a man of amiable character, was thirty-seven years of age, having been born near London in 1582 ; and it is a valuable corroboration of the testimony to the excellence of the actor, especially in *Richard III.*, which Corbet may very well have had an opportunity of personally testing, that in one of his poems he tells us that an inn-

keeper, referring to Richard in the play, spoke of him as *Burbage*. The identification and illusion were so thorough.

One is permitted, on the one hand, to know next to nothing of the antecedents of the elder Burbage, who first appears on the scene in 1576 as a man in prosperous circumstances, and one hesitates, on the contrary, to associate with this particular branch any notice relative to persons of the same name and period, since there appear to have been Burbages in several parts of England about this time. But it is just worth mentioning that a very fine copy of the *Spider and the Fly*, by John Heywood, 1556, is before me, bearing on the title, in a firm and well-formed hand, the coeval autograph of *Ninian Burbage*; and the ostensible residence of the family of the hosteler in London, taken with his leaning to theatrical, if not literary matters, makes it at least more probable that this book belonged to the same stock than to any settled in the provinces. The interest of the signature—a solitary record—partly lies in its encouragement of a hope that such accidental survivals may not yet be exhausted.

CHAPTER III.

Conjugal relations. No parallel case. Shakespear compared to Plautus. Common want of sympathy between literary men and their domestic circles. Montaigne. Shakespear's connection with Oxford and the Davenants. His temptations. Supposed reference to himself in Henry V. Considerations on the autobiographical texture of the works. Some examples from Hamlet. The Poet's profound attachment to his native place. Uncongenial character of his environments. How his wife may be thought to have unconsciously promoted his success. Conjectural reference to his rise in the Return from Parnassus.

It strikes us all as a most signally remarkable circumstance, that a young couple with a family beginning to grow up round them, within three or four years of their union, should agree to part, not while the husband and father left his home for some special reason in search of employment elsewhere, but virtually for ever; for, whatever the actual process and arrangements were, such was the case. It is in the last degree questionable, whether Shakespear, in his visits to Warwickshire at intervals between 1587 and 1611 or thereabout, saw his wife or at all events slept under the same roof. Constitutional incompatibility or a special unrecorded occurrence produced the usual result; and indeed we find the Poet, even where important matters of business might have seemed to call for his presence on the spot, delegating to one of his brothers or to his cousin Greene the management of the details on his behalf.

There was no second example of an Elizabethan author, both during and at the close of a highly successful career, returning to his own county and natal place—in fact dividing his time after a certain period of life between London and the country. The case of Samuel Daniel was essentially different.

But there was an infinitely earlier instance of a man, who eventually won a high rank as a playwright, and who, after certain youthful vicissitudes, hired himself to a theatre, where he assisted in the mechanical department—worked in fact as an artizan; and it was that of Plautus, who unquestionably thus acquired, as Shakespear did, a knowledge of the wants of the stage and the taste of audiences. The English master unconsciously trod in the footsteps of his Roman prototype, some of whose works were accessible to him in our vernacular, but of whose personal career he was more than possibly ignorant. A second respect, in which the two writers approached each other, was the attribution to both of works, for which they were not responsible, either from error, or from a less pardonable motive.

The more than presumable ignorance of his literary productions—more especially his early lyrics, so redolent of passion and so suggestive of disloyalty—on the part of his wife, if not of his private circle generally, raises the wider question whether the immediate connections of distinguished writers have not, as a rule, failed to sympathize with works which to the rest of the world have been an object of the deepest, even of idolatrous, admiration. It is likely to have been the case with such authors as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Montaigne, no less than with our poet. There was of necessity the vague knowledge that they had done certain things, and there was the clearer feeling that those things had rendered them famous; but as the wife of Shakespear probably never read a line of any poem or play penned by her husband, it is almost more certain that the contents of the *Essays* were a sealed book to Mademoiselle de Montaigne. Both alike took for granted the world's verdict; and in the latter instance, certainly, it was as well that it was so, looking at some of the domestic and confidential allusions which meet the eye here and there. Yet had Mistress Shakespear been questioned as to the Sonnets and their story, it is more than doubtful if that lady would have had any information to offer.

In strict truth the parallel with Montaigne is an imperfect and unjust one; for although his wife and daughter might have been unaware of the exact value and interest of his writings, they were conscious of his distinguished rank as a scholar, and cordially seconded the editorial labours of Mademoiselle de Gournay. More even than that, for the widow deposited one of the annotated copies of the edition of 1588 in the public library at Bordeaux, to be a lasting memorial of the departed.

It is greatly regrettable that there are no surer aids to following the footprints of Shakespear in his journeys on horseback or by waggon to and from the Metropolis, while he divided his time between his home at Stratford and his professional engagements in London, and more particularly in his periodical sojourns at Oxford, where he is supposed to have given a preference to the Crown Inn, then in the Cornmarket, near Carfax, as a stopping point. This house was taken in 1604 by John Davenant, who was the father of the dramatist of that name in more than one sense, inasmuch as he possessed a taste for the theatre, and admired the plays of his occasional guest. The acquaintance of these two personages, Shakespear and the elder Davenant, was not improbably formed very shortly after the commencement of the new proprietorship of the Crown, for in 1605 one of Shakespear's Plays was performed before the Corporation of Oxford, and as it was the comparatively new tragedy of *Hamlet*, in which the author not only bore a part, but may be taken to have felt an unusual interest, and the scene of representation was so near his native place, his presence is almost as indubitable as at the private exhibition of *Love's Labor's Lost* at Southampton House, after the earl's release in 1603.

There is, however, the rather weighty *caveat* to be entered in respect to these obscure movements, while the Sonnets were in gradual course of composition, that some of the excursions on horseback were either not to Stratford at all, or embraced a point where a collateral attraction had arisen; and this feature in the

matter is the more worthy of admittance, in illustration and proof, that it lay at the root, one suspects, of the matrimonial trouble which wrought such miserable consequences about 1596 to the Shakespears, and was never healed.

In considering a man of the intellectual calibre and temperament of Shakespear, and in treating the subject as a matter of calm and dispassionate biographical record, the insignificant tales of gallantries and intrigues, which have descended to us under various auspices, hardly merit serious discussion, even if the pieces of gossip and scandal are very probably founded on fact. The poet passed the greater part of his middle life in London amid the gaieties and temptations, from which neither he nor his fellows were humanly likely to escape without contact and notice. It was antecedent to the green room and the women-actors, and Shakespear, Burbage, and the rest were spared the fascinations of the ballet-dancer; but there was never any deficiency of bonny damsels and complaisant hostesses in town and country. The author of *Venus and Adonis*, who, we should not forget, lived so long and so constantly, as we should now colloquially say, *en garçon*, was what the goddess of Love would, according to him, have desired the object of her passion to be. Who shall say that he never proved a Tarquin to some unchronicled Lucrece? It was the opulent and voluptuous property of his blood—a perpetual spring of warm and deep emotions—which accomplished for us all the nobler and purer things that we so cherish, yet that was chargeable, too, with certain infirmities of our strange composite nature. Greatness and its foil arise from one germ. But vague tradition and tavern anecdotes do not assist us to any extent in elucidating the secret history of Shakespear. We must principally lean on internal clues and documentary witnesses.

It has been thought possible that Shakespear, in picturing the remarkable change (according to the received idea) in Henry V. on his accession to the crown, had a side-look to his own emergence from an adventurous and obscure career into all that was

noble and glorious : into something which partook indeed of the nature of its sources and surroundings, while it so strangely, so vastly, and so enduringly eclipsed them all. But the reformation of the prince is more or less doubtful, nor do I know that the poet on his side had greater cause for self-reproach than most of his set. The analogy, if there be any, was limited to the almost electrifying advent from an unlooked-for quarter, from a pen first of all speculatively employed in verbal revision, of a literary power superior (as it would then be judged) even to that of Greene or Marlowe.

The experiment has been tried—one susceptible of abuse and excess, I allow—of constructing an autobiography from detached passages of the works ; and it becomes from the straitened amount of more direct and legitimate material a venture the more pardonable. But some of the most interesting and, I should like to add, persuasive clues are the expressions of feeling put into the mouths of such interchangeable characters as Hamlet and the melancholy Jaques ; for, regarding the former as historically and biographically fabulous, there is much of his philosophy, which might as fitly have been given to the other *persona*, and *vice versâ* ; and all these utterances are more or less cynical and atrabilious. Scores of them might be lifted out of their places in the text, and printed in sequence ; and they would tell one story—that of a magnificent career smitten by a blight.

Let us listen to Hamlet, as he addresses Ophelia (Act iii., scene 1) :—

“ I am myself indifferent honest ; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me . . . What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth ? . . . Get thee to a nunnery, go ; farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool ; *for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them.*”

This is the sarcastic, self-disparaging vein. The question is, is it not a personal touch ? There are other very similar allusions scattered about, and the insistence is too frequent, too explicit, and

even too inconsequent, where it immediately offers itself, to permit more than a single conclusion.

We can scarcely wonder, that Shakespear escaped from his incompatible domestic circumstances, even prior to a practical severance of the nuptial tie, and sought relief and distraction among associates, whose company was not very beneficial. The precise chronological place of the mad frolic, where the poet passed the night under a hedge, probably on his way home from a merry meeting, is unsettled; it recalls the very similar story of Cowley and Dean Sprat, which was attended by more serious consequences; and when we hear that Dryden latterly gave way, under the encouragement of Addison, to intemperate habits, it is not unreasonable to trace them to a private source—to connubial discord.

The natural objection to the autobiographical theory is, that the other dramatic writers of the age, save here and there in a prefatory way, have not converted their productions in a similar manner into vehicles for covert or indirect notices of themselves. But the obvious reply is, that none of these was situated, from a worldly point of view, as Shakespear was. They were not persons of substance and social status; there was not the singularity of a divided household, with its incidence of romance, mystery, and sorrow; and private references would have lacked the interest which they possess in an enhanced measure here, from the terms in which they are couched, and the adroit mode of introducing them.

The allodial affection, so to speak, must have been inextinguishably strong to preserve that loyalty to the Warwickshire home in the face of such meagre inducements and such niggard sympathy, for assuredly no man even of more moderate gifts was less regarded by those about him and belonging to him than this one of whom I write. Not a traditional syllable from the lips of the father or the mother, the wife or the children, significant of honour or pride; not a hint on the part of the Halls, the Quineys, or the Barnards, that their kinsman was more than such another as themselves. No audible notes of praise, nor ocular signs of

admiration or gratitude in the place of birth, in stolid, drowsy Stratford, muter than sphinx, through the centuries : once, only once, waking from an eternal lethargy, and lifting its voice by one of its own offspring, to utter winged words hearable by all men for time everlasting.

Where the scene of his triumphs lay, in even then cosmopolitan London, it was that he mingled with those, who were capable of appreciating his power and of realizing the advent of a new master and of a new epoch in dramatic literature. Greene and Marlowe were no more ; he was *facile princeps*. But here we approach a very important and notable suggestion as to the unconquerable bent of our poet's mind—one, which recalls the fond contemplation by Warren Hastings of the English country home, which he had left behind, and to which his ultimate return after a grand Indian career was probably the happiest and proudest moment of his life.

Not his unprecedented popularity as a writer and even as an actor, not the companionship of his fellows, not the caresses of the great, not the immeasurably greater convenience and amenity of the metropolis, sufficed to overcome the inborn provincial instinct and bias, or to wean him from that soil and atmosphere, where he first drew breath, which was everything to him, to which he was unconsciously to become everything. For him London was ever mainly the means to an end—the source of the purchase-money of New Place and of what that purchase imported. That he originally counted on such an almost life-long stay on the theatre of his exertions and successes is doubtful, inasmuch as it is doubtful, whether he could have had a full and distinct foreknowledge of the domestic complications, which went so far to neutralize and frustrate his efforts. Yet, like other builders of their own fortunes, he was continually setting back the limits of his wants and his aspirations. In the person of Osric in *Hamlet* he ridicules a man “spacious in the possession of dirt,” and what became his own aims ?

An individual of universal intellect, of universal acceptance, kept in his mind's eye year after year, as an abode in an old age, which he was never to attain, and a resting-place for his bones, a rural village far away from the life to which in his professional character he had become seemingly wedded or at least reconciled. In Stratford he was among his own people, and had no patrons, himself a patron of others. But, looking at the other side of the question, difficulties are perceivable. The household at home was not to be transplanted to the capital with ease or with advantage; the wife and daughters had never beheld London; and down to 1601 John Shakespear, and down to 1608 his widow, were living. They were, one and all, rather impracticable villagers. If the member of the family whom the world best knows had ever dreamed of removing permanently, like so many other adventurers, to the Metropolis, his domestic ties must have helped to dissuade him from the step, and have eventually brought about that anomalous distribution of his time and presence. Neither the rural nor the personal attractions of Stratford were calculated to be of sufficient potency to turn the scale, had there not existed collateral motives, among which an innate affection for the spot, with all its drawbacks, was not the least.

It is, of course, not difficult to trace the origin of the imperfect sympathy between Shakespear and connections by marriage of an almost puritanical turn of thought, when we contemplate the Poems and Sonnets, so luxurious and fervid in their language and sentiment, apart from their mere literary merit and occasional obscurity—at least to us.

Judging from an account given by the parish clerk of Stratford, in or about 1693, when all the immediate descendants of the poet were dead, the family was not liked, and Shakespear was regarded as the best—not precisely in the sense in which we should use the phrase, but as the most popular and neighbourly. Did the others stand off on the strength of the reputation and rank of the dramatist and poet, whom they did so little to

encourage? There seems at that time, when a renown so great and so widely diffused should have yet survived in undiminished strength, to have been a comparative forgetfulness of the only personage of note ever yielded or to be yielded by the town, if the reference to the wife as "one Mrs. Shakespear" be a fair sample of the local indifference and crassitude. Perhaps it is not; for by an odd solecism the memorandum, where the expression is used, purports to be one "of Persons Remarkable" mentioned in the Register. The two entries were possibly made by different hands.

It is deserving of hope at least that the said "one Mrs. Shakespear" had her share of pleasure and enjoyment within the narrow lines by which she was bounded. This shadowy character, more enigmatical than her husband, offers us barely any assistance toward an elucidation of her monotonous provincial career. She is all but inarticulate. No echoes of her voice have reached our ears. Her husband has in no measured strains lamented his lot, and it was, no doubt, in a matrimonial sense, an ill-starred one. But of the lady there is a smaller salvage even than of the daughters, who advance into the foreground and light a little here and there, if it is only to make a mark or affix a rudimentary signature on some parchment. She, who could have told us so much in the way of fact or report, descended to the grave without uttering an audible syllable—without letting us understand something of the real history of the dark woman of the Sonnets, and where the rivalry lay.

Nevertheless, by virtue of that principle of indemnity in all human affairs, what more influential factor than the wife in making the poet what he became, in developing a genius which might have lain dormant, can be imagined? If he had not been sensible of a far more potent motive for making London, not Stratford, his centre, than the transient deer-stealing episode: if there had not arisen some grave domestic friction by reason of the discovery of an intrigue between Shakespear and another woman—*forsan* the dark figure of the Sonnets—a career more satisfactory

in one sense, and far less so in another, might have been that of our dramatist. He might have returned to his native town, and have succeeded his father as a local trader and an alderman, and that sacred spot on the Avon would have long since been buried in silence and in oblivion.

1586-7 is commonly, perhaps rightly, given as the date of the final arrival of Shakespear in the metropolis, not as a visitor, but with a view to entrance on the serious business of life. In 1597 New Place became his property. It was the most important residential site in the town, and although his father had long enjoyed a certain share of consideration as a man of business and a municipal officer, the fluctuating state of his affairs from various causes had never enabled him to assume a distinguished and substantial position among those of his own class at Stratford. The successful career of his son could not be a secret, as inhabitants of the town periodically visited London, while theatrical companies and other Londoners took Stratford at intervals in their professional or business tours. Yet from a local and domestic point of view the change in the fortunes of the Shakespears must have seemed surprizingly rapid, and must have awakened a mixed feeling cognate in some respects to that excited in the English capital by the rise of a dramatic and theatrical constellation, which threatened to eclipse all others, and to transform an obscure Warwickshire village into the most famous literary suburb of London.

In 1596 Shakespear was thirty-three. In a decade he had more than laid the foundations of his fortune. He had yet to crown the edifice of his literary fame by the successive production of his masterpieces. But it was marvellously swift progress. Was it not an unique record? Was it not the happy union of genius and professional aptitude, which accounted for such a result? One rather important point is to be duly weighed. In all our affairs there is said to be compensation; and the personal and domestic exigencies of Shakespear, whatever their collateral bear-

ing on his private relations may have been, conferred on him as a writer the immense advantage of completing and extending in London the practical education, of which the groundwork and rural side had been gained at home. It was no small matter, after mastering the whole costume of English provincial life, for such an one to have the opportunity, so to speak, forced upon him of spending the best part of his career within reach of all that the metropolis of England possessed of knowledge, learning, and culture.

There is the obligation, so to put it, cast upon us by unquestioned facts, not only in regard to the significant jealousy of fellow-playwrights, but to the possession in 1597 of the means of acquiring New Place, of accepting for granted that between, let us say, 1590 and the later date Shakespear was incessantly at work on dramatic composition and recension of a more or less highly remunerative character; for the Sonnets and other lyrics can be scarcely supposed to have brought much more than literary celebrity. It was in these years that he laid the foundation of fame and fortune. Yet he gave nothing thus far to the theatres beyond the amended and developed work of others; some of the historical series in their second state, previously to their final completion, as we read them in the first folio; perhaps *Arden of Faversham* and *Edward the Third*, and more certainly *Titus Andronicus*, which, whatever may be the modern estimate, was a most popular performance, and is stated by Edward Ravenscroft in his altered version, 1686, to have been composed by another author, and revised by Shakespear. The piece continued to hold the stage down to the time of James I. Christopher Marlowe had died in the summer of 1593; it is more likely to have been an unfinished production of his unequal pen than of Kyd. Langbaine, writing in 1691, states that there was a printed edition of 1594; but it is no longer known. Besides these efforts the pen and mind of Shakespear must have been intent on a hundred other kindred ventures, all converging to a single issue—the

attainment of worldly independence, while each approached a step nearer to those masterpieces, which have so dwarfed their predecessors, and reduced them in our appreciation to speculative material for filling up or explaining a biographical void.

In the *Return from Parnassus*, a drama ascribed to 1604 or thereabout, when our poet had almost reached the height of his professional and financial eminence, there is a reference by Studioso, one of the characters, to adventurers,

“that carried erst their fardles on their backs,—”

Who ride on horseback through the streets with pages to attend their masterships, and the speaker is made to add :

“They purchase lands, and now esquires are made—”

Some have thought that Shakespear was here indicated. It seems to me, I confess, more likely that the Author had Edward Alleyn in view, although Alleyn, the son of a London innholder, was probably never a needy man. The picture would certainly not suit Shakespear. He is nowhere described as an esquire.

CHAPTER IV.

Shakespear's success and its sources. His managerial and proprietary functions lucrative. His lyrical publications probably of slight commercial account. Domestic affairs. Death of his only son in 1596. Suspected informal separation of husband and wife. Condition and tenancy of New Place. The hope of founding a family shattered. Mental harass. Death at or near Stratford (1616). Relations between him and his wife. Testamentary dispositions. Friendly meetings in later days at Stratford. Difference between the seventeenth century inns and ours. Presumed motive for the visit of Jonson and Drayton in 1615-16. Remarks about the destruction of New Place and the mulberry-tree. Political views of Shakespear. His strong repugnance to the Puritans. Allusion to his daughters' names. Conversational fragments. His indifference to invasion of his rights as an author. Speculation as to relations with the Lucys in later life. John Shakespear and Falstaff. The poet's obligations to his father. Resemblance of Susanna Shakespear (Mrs. Hall) to the poet in a practical respect.

THE worldly prosperity of Shakespear, we have to remember, was attributable to his dual position as a playwright and a part-owner of the house or houses, where his works were presented. In 1592 he had become an object of envy and satire, which tell their own tale, and at which he could afford to smile; in 1597 he was the owner of New Place. Setting on one side the published poems and the unpublished sonnets, which did not perhaps altogether yield much, his editorial and professional labours during ten years (1587-97) were not only lucrative, though involving constant attention to technical and mechanical details, but prepared the way for the success of those more important and original efforts, which were to mark and cover the remainder of his active career, and which render his personality what we see it to-day. In estimating the conduct of our great poet, it is always to be recollected, that he was primarily a maker of plays, secondly an actor in them, thirdly (and concurrently) a profit-sharer, and,

last of all, a poet in the sense that Daniel, Drayton, and others were poets, or, in other words, the author of *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, the *Sonnets*, and a few other miscellaneous lyrics of medium quality.

Taking common sense and human nature—two fairly safe guides—as conductors, we seem to be brought to a conclusion, which is scarcely to be called a new one, yet which has never hitherto been carried so far from the premises. The virtual desertion of Stratford in 1586 or 1587 as the poet's headquarters was dictated by commercial and professional exigencies; and that he revisited his home at intervals down to a certain time is more than probable. The purchase of a property and an important one in his native place, not only in the shape of a residence, but in land and tithes, marks his solicitude and expectation to become the founder of a family, to which the expenditure of some considerable time in negotiating with Heralds' College for a grant of arms to his father manifestly tended and appertained; and although in his admirable books there is no hint of the kind, we perceive that in 1608-9 in the Addenbroke suit* he is officially and advisedly described as *generosus*. In 1596 the first blow to his hopes in such a direction arrived in the death of his only son, and it must have been about the same time that, owing to a cause or causes, which it is easier to guess than establish, there was an informal separation, by which the wife became dependent on some sort of alimony or some support from relatives, sufficiently inadequate to render it necessary for her to borrow forty shillings from a man who had formerly acted as her father's shepherd. This uncomfortable view is not disproved by the later visits to Stratford, and ultimate settlement of Shakespear there; and, on the contrary, there is the entry in the Diary of Thomas Greene, the lawyer and Shakespear's relative, under date of November 17, 1614, where he mentions that "my cousin Shakespear, *coming yesterday to town*, I went to see him, how he did." Greene plainly

* Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines*, 6th ed., ii., 78-80.

intended to convey, that the poet was staying somewhere in the vicinity of Stratford, and that in one of his visits to town—Stratford, not London—the cousin called upon him to inquire after his health, which was already indifferent. It is sufficiently well known that it is the customary parlance to this day in relation to the outskirts or suburbs of any place, to refer to the latter as “town.” To have supposed that Greene meant London, is simply preposterous.

New Place, or the Great House, must be taken to have been more or less in the tenancy of the owner's family from 1602 to 1607, the date of the marriage of Susanna Shakespear. From 1608 to 1610 or 1611, Thomas Greene was the lessee. At Michaelmas, 1610, Greene was preparing to quit, and at Midsummer, 1611, he was domesticated elsewhere; but in 1614 a preacher, who was the guest of the corporation, was apparently lodged here, and received at the public expense a quart of sack and one of claret, which argues a two or three days' stay and the absence of the owner. The stranger is concluded to have been a puritan, of whom the Halls were apter to be tolerant than the master of the house; but he was at any rate no enemy to good liquor.

It has been thought that the premises were at the time of acquisition in a bad state of repair; and we shall not be far from the truth, perhaps, in surmising that no complete restoration took place in the lifetime of the poet, even if the Halls, who resided there after his death, accomplished much in such a direction, or did more than use the habitable rooms. A man, whose whole career had been devoted to the accumulation of property by the exercise of the superlative faculties unexpectedly revealed in him, and who had hardened himself to rough and casual modes of subsistence in London, may have well failed to appreciate or study the elegant or even genteel refinements of domestic life, and he would have eyed it as a very doubtful investment, particularly under the circumstances which we seem to be obliged to admit,

to have converted a dilapidated mansion into an abode suitable for a gentleman of substance and position, nay, of some sort of literary repute among those of the Court and the great city.

Moreover, it is to be taken into account, I am afraid, that the last days of that matchless career were darkened and saddened by domestic estrangement, nor can we be even assured that Shakespear's death-bed was tended by the wife of his youth. In what I believe to have been almost his latest dramatic effort, as it was the most finished one, the *Tempest*, he has bequeathed to us something like authority for the view that marital disunion and unhappiness still haunted him in 1611 or thereabout, while the Welcombe enclosure episode of 1614-15 reveals to us a state of mental susceptibility and harass for which such a circumstance does not seem *per se* answerable.

There seems to be too strong a ground for the view that Shakespear deferred his retirement too long, and that when he ultimately arranged (in 1612, as it seems) to spend at all events the bulk of his time at home, having parted with his theatrical interests, his health was seriously impaired. In addition to the mental strain involved in the provision of a constant series of novelties for the stage during several years, and the unavoidable worry and labour attendant on his duties as a manager and actor, he had suffered much annoyance from local disputes, complications, and disasters,* which threatened to touch him nearly as a land and tithe owner. Nor is it to be supposed that, as he was situated in London, at a distance from his household, the tenor of his life was conducive to physical welfare, far less longevity. The true history of his personal association with Stratford amounts to little more than occasional visits during the busier years, and a

* There had been fires at Stratford in 1594 and 1595, and one still more serious in the autumn of 1614, when 54 houses were destroyed. A fourth occurred in 1616, which it is possible that the poet lived to witness, as a public proclamation respecting it, dated May 11, was probably some time posterior to the event.

nearly uninterrupted residence there from 1614 to 1616, in a state of declining strength of body, if not of mind.

The postponement of the ultimate departure from London, which I am disposed to place not earlier than 1612, and concurrent severance of his ties with the theatre and the literary world, were not unnaturally influenced by the contemplation of the ungenial home and the poorer companionship in store for him, with the absolute improbability of return. But there was the reassurance of the medical care of his son-in-law, the presence of his favourite daughter, and the prospect, which was realized to our knowledge in one instance, of a visit from old London intimates. There was repose ; there was more than competence ; there was the respect, perhaps the homage, of his townsmen ; but it was not the consummation which the greatest man in England, as we now think, might have expected, and have been entitled to expect, nor do the facts, so far as I collect them, bear out the bright picture drawn of his last years by some of his biographers.

In *Hamlet*, iii. 2, in reference to the king having died a short time before, the prince exclaims : “ O heavens ! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet ! Then there’s hope a great man’s memory may outlive his life half a year—” Was the writer musing, when he set down these words about 1601, on his own affairs, and on the prospect of early oblivion ?

It is an inference as unavoidable indeed, as it is unwelcome, that the relations between husband and wife remained at the close unfriendly, if it is not even doubtful, whether the latter was present to witness the last moments, and hear the last accents, of the poet. In his will, as it was originally written, no mention of her occurred, and the concession of a bed and its furniture arose, perhaps, from the circumstance, that it was an article of use removed to the place, where she was separately domiciled. The gift was an interlineation and an afterthought. Not only did the Halls receive the bulk of the estate, but the entire executorship was vested in them jointly ; the second daughter Judith, who was not married

till February, 1616, is a beneficiary to some extent ; but the dominant object of the testator was most manifestly to preserve the hardly won property in his posterity ; and he not only followed a very usual course, where there was no male issue, of letting the eldest female succeed, but evinced, on the whole, a preference for the Halls, in spite of the Doctor's distasteful religious views, over Judith and the Quineys, into whose family he just lived to see her married. For Susanna more closely resembled her father, and might be expected to nurse the estate, while, whatever Judith might be or do, her intended husband's people were not financially sound, and subsequently proved eminently unsatisfactory, Thomas Quiney himself thoroughly justifying the distrust of his illustrious kinsman by absconding from Stratford, and deserting his family. The devolution of the main property on the Halls became the sole alternative.

Yet let us observe that when their son died in 1596, the Shakespears were both in the prime of life, and might well have renewed the male succession, had not an independent obstacle existed, had not cohabitation previously determined.

The wife, as I say, was barely recollected, and this merely in a manner, which tends to corroborate, not the affection of her husband, but her retirement from coverture, and I take her rupture with him to have been, as I state above, of many years' duration, and to have been forcibly present to the poet, when he effected the Blackfriars purchase in 1613, and barred her title to dower under that head. The lady was in fact left entirely dependent on her daughters ; and it seems to belong to the painful story, that such an inconsiderable sum as 40s. advanced to her by an acquaintance was not repaid without legal pressure.

We are assured by tradition, that before her death in 1623 she expressed a desire to lie in the same grave with her husband ; but the plan was not carried out beyond the allotment to her remains of a spot in the chancel near those of the poet ; and her son-in-law Hall, who might more profitably have occupied himself

in leaving us some particulars of Shakespear, composed in her honour a conventional and dull Latin epitaph, which amounts exactly to nothing.

It seems to belong to the anomalous relations, which subsisted during so many years between the poet and his native place, and the more than to be suspected breach with his wife, that there is no hint of Shakespear having at any point of time filled the position in the borough, to which his social, literary, and financial pretensions so well entitled him. The extreme probability is, that, unlike his father, he entertained no taste for municipal honours, and that, when he had about 1612 permanently settled in the country, his health soon became precarious and his movements uncertain. Under any circumstances, he was a man unapt to relish parochial business, unless it directly concerned him; and then there was his cousin Greene to act for him.

Consequently the home life in and after 1612 down to the close of the scene, was bound to prove irksome and injurious in practical experience, whatever might have been hoped from it; and the withdrawal from the theatre of his labours and his noble achievements, and the loss of nearly all congenial spirits, had an inherent tendency to shorten that incomparable career.

When I doubt the likelihood that the poet ever made, or aspired to make, New Place an abode such as it had been, and such as it subsequently became in other hands, he may be presumed to have lost no time in executing repairs absolutely essential to the maintenance of the premises, since he is reported as obtaining stone for the purpose in 1598, while, in consequence of some flaw in the conveyance, he was not yet in legal possession; and in or about 1602, when the title deeds were perhaps at last delivered, he planted two apple-orchards—whether on any portion of the existing garden or not, is uncertain, and subsequently—it is thought in 1609—the historical mulberry.

We appear justified in tracing him to some provisional residence near Stratford in the winter of 1614, and in concluding his

health at that juncture to have given way. When he resumed his occupation of New Place—not in the society of his wife, but at any rate within reach of his daughters, there is no precise indication; but he was there in the very beginning of 1616, and there he drew, according to the accepted notion, his last breath.

What man, before or since, accomplished a great mission with such vast gain to others, with so little in certain ways to himself? The end may have been, and may yet be deemed, premature, yet he had compressed into that narrow span of five-and-twenty or thirty years of luxuriant activity all perhaps that he had to say to us and of us.

The visit of Jonson and Drayton to Stratford in 1615-16 is a well-aired tale; but its latent significance and speciality of interest seem to have been overlooked. I augur that the tidings of the impaired strength of their life-long friend had reached the ears of his two eminent contemporaries and fellow-poets, not improbably through a common friend at least of Drayton, Thomas Greene, Shakespear's relative, and had inspired them with an anxiety to meet him once more. The gratification at an interview, for which he could scarcely have hoped, was apt to favour a temporary rally, and to betray into an excess of indulgence the owner of a debilitated constitution. Jonson and his companion did not see the incident with our eyes, or we should have possessed particulars of a pilgrimage so famous and so sad; and the excellent Dr. Hall has thwarted us in a similar manner by omitting to narrate his experiences, when he attended Shakespear in his fatal illness.

The evidence that the poet expired at New Place appears to be only presumptive. He had been, as I seek to establish, quartered somewhere in the outskirts of Stratford not long, at all events, prior to his last sickness, and was, judging from information, which we derive from his cousin, in the habit of occasionally coming into town (that is, into Stratford), when something required his presence. Nor are the circumstances attending his

immediate interment altogether free from obscurity ; there is the bare entry of his burial ; but we fail to meet with even such a notice as accompanied that of his brother Edmund in 1607 at St. Mary Overy's in Southwark. Our actual knowledge is narrowed in fact to his eventual consignment to the grave in the chancel, in which his widow unsuccessfully solicited, that she should rest with him.

Of the complaint, which proved fatal on the 23rd April, 1616 (O. S.), there are conflicting opinions. It is far likelier that the fever was what we term a putrid fever, arising from the surrounding insanitary conditions, and not impossibly aggravated by secondary causes, and such a view is supported by the hasty interment on the third day. When the youngest brother of the poet, Edmund the playwright, a young man of seven-and-twenty, was committed to the earth in 1607, the event was honoured, doubtless through the instigation of Shakespear, then resident close at hand, by a special peal of the great bell of St. Saviour's. There is not even a record in the Stratford register of the death of Shakespear himself, merely an entry in the briefest terms of the funeral, which might have been under the suspected circumstances still more expeditious, had not the claim to a place in the chancel for the remains occasioned some delay.

There must have been more or less frequent meetings in later days both in London and Stratford, apart from the convivial entertainments at the Mermaid and other London inns, where there were agreeable retrospections of early scenes and experiences, of pleasures and triumphs sometimes not unchecked by disappointments. Nevertheless, it is impossible to be unaware, as soon as we have studied the personal bent and temper of the author with any considerable amount of attention, that he was, of all those connected with the Elizabethan theatre, when he gained eminence, almost the least likely to bestow much time in common festive enjoyment, and was, moreover, when he stayed in London, too busily engrossed by his professional and private concerns to

have leisure for the attractions of the tavern and the social club. Edward Alleyn, Philip Henslowe, and himself resembled each other in looking at the practical side. That there were moments alike in town and country, when even he relaxed, is less than doubtful; the great poet was apparently no Puritan in any sense.

The former place of the inn or hostelry in relation to the private house, when gatherings or interviews were to be arranged for purposes of business or pleasure, forms a rather important element in considering and comprehending the movements of Shakespear, more especially as it seems to be admitted that, even when a man possessed such an unusual facility for receiving guests at his own house, he was accustomed to repair with them to a tavern. The meetings of the poet and his literary friends in the metropolis at such establishments are intelligible enough; there, down to 1612, he had no available residence, nor is it probable that he ever inhabited the house in Blackfriars; but at Stratford there was New Place, and still he appears to have resorted elsewhere to sit with friends from London or with neighbours. It was a widely diffused practice which he pursued, and one which has not become obsolete, especially abroad, where at one time political and municipal conferences were held at restaurants, each person bringing or paying for his own wine. The solution of this strange habit is to be sought in the insufficiency of domestic resources for entertaining strangers; and the Shakespears were perhaps no exceptions to the prevailing rule, if we keep out of view any peculiar repugnance in that case on the part of the women of the family to theatrical society, and what it has become the fashion to term Bohemianism. The intercourse under such circumstances was apt to be between man and man; and the professional acquaintances of the poet did not necessarily know the other inmates of his household. We collect that he saw comparatively little of them himself. In fact, one of the mysteries connected with the present subject is the occupancy of New Place by strangers, more particularly after the marriage of Susanna

Shakespear in 1607. The masterless establishment at Stratford deserves closer attention at the hands of biographers than it has hitherto received. I have tried to do my part.

The explicit declaration in the will, that in January, 1616, he was dwelling at New Place, may be treated in more than one sense, or is capable of more than one meaning. The theory, that he had become provisionally or temporarily domiciled elsewhere by no means supersedes the house at Stratford as his recognised and legal headquarters; it amounts to no more than the possibility that for some unknown reason he may have been in the last year of his life and at the time of his more or less sudden death, as he evidently was in 1614-15, in residence at a point near enough to Stratford "to come to town" at intervals. The state of the draft-will, which unexpectedly became the ultimate and sole one, is so unsatisfactory, that it is hard to say whether what was true as to New Place in January of the year continued to be so in the last week of March. Let me add, that in one of the testamentary forms in West's *Symbolography*, 1590, there is the expression and passage: " . . . the occupation of this house and fermeholdes wherein I now dwell at H. with thappurtenances"—as if a person might at that time be understood to dwell at an address, yet not be uninterruptedly resident there.

The history of the will and the true facts as to its first appearance in any shape are, and are likely to remain, mysteries and problems. The poet, just about the time—in 1614-15—when his strength was evidently failing, and he was permanently settled, if not at New Place or Stratford, at all events in the vicinity, was clearly in habitual communication with his kinsman Greene, and he had availed himself of his services as a person of practical experience in 1608-9 in the Addenbroke business. The aspect of the document, which has alone descended to us, might tempt us to conclude, that, although it may not represent all that was ever drawn up of such a nature, it is the sole effort of the testator to secure his property posterior to the loss of his son in

1596; we observe that he declares toward the end of the testament, that he revokes *all former wills*; this is a common covering phrase; but the existence and even survival of one prior one, at all events, executed during the life-time of Hamnet Shakespear are not merely likely, but the adoption of such a precautionary measure is as almost beyond a doubt, as it is eminently characteristic. The disappointment at the frustration of his prospect of a direct heir not unnaturally relaxed his interest in the succession, where the choice lay between the Halls and the Quineys, both of whom presented objections and drawbacks—the former in their Puritanism and the latter in their thriftlessness. It is extremely noteworthy that in an early passage Shakespear had evidently intended to leave a sum of £150 to Thomas Quiney himself, but on reflection caused his partly written description to be struck out and that of Judith to be substituted. A yet more remarkable afterthought and interlineation was the bequest of the second-best bed to his wife; this disposition has produced endless discussion and speculation. I suggest that if the rest of the family was at the Great House at the time of executing the will, the wife was almost certainly not so, and the piece of furniture may have accompanied Mrs. Shakespear to the residence where she was living apart perhaps with friends. In the infirm state of the testator's health it is as likely as not that he overlooked the circumstance of the bed being elsewhere. This theory must be taken for what it is worth; my personal opinion is that it is worth something.

The haste, with which the testamentary dispositions were eventually completed, is familiar enough. What, if any, share Greene had in the matter, we do not know; but he was on the spot, if alterations were needed at short notice, whereas Francis Collins the attorney, usually credited with the manipulation of the business, lived at Warwick—a serious distance in those days on an emergency. I should augur that the apparent addition of the first and second subscriptions to the will bespeak the absence of Collins, when the signature at the end was appended, and his

arrival at Stratford only in time to indicate the legal desirability of the others; the witnesses, Collins and three others, are said to attest the publication or probate, not the signature. But it appears rather difficult to decide the exact sense *then* attachable to the word *publish*. A will is at present understood to be published only, when it has been proved. The question lies, so far as one can see, between Greene and Collins. A book of reference, assisting laymen to frame their own wills without professional assistance, had come to an enlarged impression in 1605-6* and furnishes a model for this, among other similar purposes, so that Shakespear and his relative might have easily contrived to draw up what we see *mutatis mutandis*, the exordium in the volume being the identical one used in the document, and all the requisite technicalities being ready to hand, even if Greene, as a notary, had not been familiar with them. For the volume in question, which passed through successive editions between 1590 and 1632, was specifically designed for the use of notaries and scriveners, and Greene can scarcely have been without a copy in his office.

The form of will in West's *Symboleography* most nearly approaching the terms found in Shakespear's commences: "In the name of God Amen, the second day of January, 1590. . . . Sicke in body, but of good and perfect memorie (God be praised) do make and ordain this my last wil & testamēt. . . . First I commend my soule into the handes of God my maker, hoping assuredly through the onely merites of Iesus Christ my Sauour to bee made partaker . . ." and so forth—almost the very words of the document which I am considering. The object of directing attention to these *minutiæ* is partly to demonstrate that the testator suffered Greene or Collins to obey the set phraseology in vogue, and that the language is by no means construable into an intimation of personal sentiment, and partly to support the view, that the document before us was more probably drawn up

* The First Part of *Symboleography*, by William West, of the Inner Temple, 4^o, 1590, 1592, 1594, 1605, 1610, 1632.

by Greene, then laid aside, and ultimately employed on the feared approach of a crisis, the finishing touches in the way of signature being put when the poet was very near his end.

Of the three autograph attestations accompanying the will, the last, which I am surely correct in apprehending to have been the first one executed, offers these three cardinal points of interest: 1. It *alone* gives the name in full; 2. It has the preliminary words *By me*, which truly seem to be regardable as the only written characters outside the mere signature anywhere extant; 3. It presents a strong affinity with the Bodleian example in one way, and with the Montaigne one in another. I at first speculated, whether the testator, having signed his name in an unusually elaborate manner, became fatigued, and could only perform the remainder of the operation in the lamentably imperfect fashion which we see. But I afterward came to a different conclusion, which was that a short interval elapsed between the attachment of the third, and the first and second, inscriptions. We cannot avoid being struck by the much firmer grasp of the pen in the words first traced—*By me William Shakspeare*; and I submit, following here the apparent opinion of Halliwell-Phillipps, that the two scrawls at the foot of folio 2 and in the margin of folio 1 were added when the poet had become bed-ridden, and was barely equal to the formation of the letters of his name. The foregoing observations may be illustrated by facsimiles of the three entries in what I take to be their true sequence:—

2B2 me William Shakspeare

Wm. Shakspeare

William
Shakspeare

Beyond the enumeration of a few items of inconsiderable importance there is no clue in the will to the nature and extent of the household effects at New Place in 1616. But, if it can be admitted as any sort of analogy, we have an inventory of the goods of Richard Barnfield the poet, taken after his death in 1627, and amounting altogether to £66. 5s. *Ibid.*, of which wearing apparel is answerable for £10, a gilt salt and spoon for £5, and books for *ten shillings*. The normal middle-class or bourgeois library in these days appears, with the fewest exceptions, to have been limited to the capacity of a shelf or two, or a cupboard. Shakespear is reputed to have left, in strict personalty, about £400; he was consequently a richer man than the author of the *Affectionate Shepherd* on that score alone, apart from his real estate; and New Place was a residence of exceptional requirements, even if it was not at all sumptuously furnished. The point which renders the Barnfield inventory most serviceable, however, is the entry under *Books*; ten shillings of 1627 were equivalent to sixty or so of our money; the number of volumes purchaseable for such a sum was excessively small at a groat each; and if Barnfield contented himself at a greater distance from London with such a handful, probably Shakespear, considering his temperament and surroundings, had no more. The particulars of sale relative to an auction at the birthplace in the first half of the last century have no actual Shakespearian bearing; but a few lots were subsequently recovered, and are visible *in situ*.

Although these pages are not intended as a medium for repeating what may be found stated elsewhere, it becomes almost imperative to bring into one focus in succinct terms the facts connected with the disappearance of New Place, so far as they are within knowledge. Every pilgrim to Stratford beholds on the site of the dwelling-house of the poet certain vestiges or remains of early foundations, and discovers that these are all that survive of the Shakespear residence. He is correctly informed; but many are

apt to conclude that the rest was as wantonly destroyed as the mulberry-tree itself in the eighteenth century by an individual insensible to their common historical and personal interest, or in spite of it. This was not so. The house of the poet had long been superseded by the Clopton building, which did not even occupy the same area as its predecessor, while the link between the mulberry and the poet was not invested with publicity till portions of the felled tree were modelled into objects of remembrance. The lack of authentic information on this favourite subject renders it all the more to be wished that such things as are ascertainable should be accurately understood.

It is in such a philosophical poem as *Hamlet* that Shakespear discovers and uses opportunities for shadowing, in the person of a character regarded as eccentric and peculiar, his own feelings, whether as a thinker or as a politician. The dramatist was naturally cautious how he committed himself by any criticism susceptible of being interpreted as a reflection or satire on the government, and when he penned the subjoined passage, he merely recorded a fact within the observation of the prince of Denmark:—

“*Ham*: By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe—”

The writer already discerned the approach of a democratic wave, which was in not so many years to sweep away both courtier and court; and on which side his sympathy lay it was not for him to disclose—it is for us only to guess. In the 107th Sonnet we read:—

“And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants’ crests and tombs of brass are spent.”

Shakespear was his own Hamlet. If he truly acted the Ghost on the boards, he acted the philosophizing and speculative Prince himself in the book and in the closet. The dramatic creation is a lay figure.

The poet sinned, in the opinion of his friend Chettle, in not having added himself to the phalanx of loyal bards, who broke into elegiac verse on the death of the queen. But he neither mourned the parting ruler, nor acclaimed her successor. Do we blame him? He had his own views of the Great in name, and contented himself perforce with giving to them a guarded expression.

But I look upon the poet as broadly, except where as in the case of Puritanism his particular calling was affected, a man of republican sentiment, as a member of that political party, which in his time was an insignificant and almost inaudible minority, and had to wait many years, before its turn arrived. In the *Merchant of Venice*, Shakespear puts into the mouth of Shylock a strong plea for human equality and general religious tolerance, just as in the same drama he makes the dusky suitor of Portia, the Prince of Morocco, vindicate himself from the common prejudice against his colour. The words of Shylock seem to justify us in hesitating to think that, even if freer institutions had been granted, while Shakespear lived, he would have gone so far as those men, who overthrew monarchy in England, and established a despotism of another kind in America. He was simply, I apprehend, an advocate for individual freedom. The Jew argues that the Christian and himself are endowed with similar faculties and prone to similar infirmities. Those of his race, he puts it, have eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions. They are fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as the rest of humanity. This was tolerably plain speech for the sixteenth century, as it was not till Cromwell came into absolute power for a season (too brief an one), that the Jews obtained in England any indulgence, while there had been no country, where they were in former times more mercilessly persecuted, and they had to wait, till the nineteenth century was far advanced, before they acquired here full political rights.

The poet was in fact a subtle exponent *in the third person* of abuse and injustice, and played, yet in a different way, agreeably to the difference of circumstances, the same part, which his contemporary Montaigne played in France. Both were political champions and liberators without being conscious, perhaps, of this part of their missions, as much as Voltaire in France and Cobbett in England at a much later period became, when indirectness of allusion had grown less imperative.

The revolt against Episcopacy, which had commenced during the youth of Shakespear, and which developed into what was known as Puritanism, constituted an influential secession from the established Protestant communion, which was perhaps of no strong personal significance to the poet, but which happened to affect or impress him indirectly in a two-fold way. The tenets, language, and dress of the new party suggested material for ridicule or censure; and the spirit of nonconformity spread over the whole country, more or less, in the course of a few years, and took possession of the household at Stratford, rendering the atmosphere of the residence less cheerful, and the sympathy with the theatrical associations and bias of the master less cordial even than before. I insist on this view the more strongly and trustingly, inasmuch as the distaste of Shakespear for Puritanism was deep and uncontrollable enough to lead him in one of his plays to emphasize the sentiment more pungently than we can find him doing in respect of any other matter of real life or history incidentally interpolated. The passage is in *Twelfth Night*:—

“*Maria*: Marry, sir. Sometimes he is a kind of Puritan.

“*Sir Andrew*: O, if I thought that, I’d beat him like a dog.

“*Sir Toby*: What, for being a Puritan? Thy exquisite reason, dear Knight.

“*Sir Andrew*: I have no exquisite reason for ’t, but I have reason good enough.”

This, with the remark of the clown in the *Winter’s Tale*, that the only Puritan in a company sings psalms to hornpipes, and

other analogous utterances, must be taken to reflect the personal sentiments of the author, naturally adverse to the movement, and intensified by its already commencing interference with his literary and commercial interests.

The poet was averse from the new sectarianism as a spirit and a movement hostile to him as a dramatist and theatrical proprietor, and he must have been aware that in levelling ridicule or satire at it, he trod on tolerably safe ground, since the new Stuart dynasty, glad to shake off the old gloomy traditions of their birth-land, manifested an equal distaste for the Puritans, with an even stronger bias than could have been anticipated toward the stage and its environments; and we know that Anne of Denmark displayed a warm interest in all the entertainments at Court and in the principal playhouses.

The pious disposition of his wife may be answerable for the baptismal appellations of their two daughters. The theological warp had set in long before godly but dull Dr. Hall appears on the scene. Then as they grew up, our Susanna and Judith reading about naughty Venus and wicked King Tarquin! Such books could not be allowed to enter the house!—not even when one of them had been licensed by his Grace the Primate. It was truly unfortunate.

The sole descents to us of any conversational fragments, where Shakespear occurs as a party, are the record left by Thomas Heywood the poet of his dissatisfaction with Jaggard the publisher for having in a reprint of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1612, improperly inserted pieces by Heywood as his work, and certain not very lucid entries in the *Diary* of his cousin Thomas Greene of Stratford relative to a proposed enclosure of some of the common fields in 1614-15. It appears that the poet entertained a profound, if mainly a sentimental objection to the step contemplated by the municipal authorities; on the 17th November, 1614, Greene informs us that his cousin, when he went to see how he did, told him what was thought to be the extent of the scheme, but that

both Mr. Hall and himself doubted if anything would be actually done. The matter was still in abeyance in September, 1615, when Shakespear declared to Greene that "he was not able to bear the enclosing of Welcombe," which seems to shew that this affair was preying on his mind, and that his bodily health was beginning to fail. There was the normal symptom of mental over-taxation—the nervous irritability. The enclosure of common fields was a source of trouble and dissension all over England; it was by no means specially a local grievance. We find it arousing indignation and resistance in the fifteenth century.

This pair of utterances, transmitted at second-hand, but in the latter case presumably as nearly as may be in the words employed, if we decipher the MS. rightly, is all that the world possesses of the kind outside the allusions, more or less direct and more or less trustworthy, in the works, to assist it in realizing the speaker in his tangible personality. The singular exaltation of Shakespear, within the last century, helps to shut out from our view and recollection the fact, that the same conditions apply to the majority of his contemporaries and even of writers of more recent date, whose productions offer no autobiographical clues, and whose families have preserved no documentary elucidations.

As regards the remark to Heywood, if it was made in London, it appears to be of this chronological and biographical value, that it shews Shakespear to be still there, just about the time, when the *Tempest* is now supposed to have been produced and performed; and the indifferent state of his health would scarcely allow him to make frequent journeys to and from the country. Heywood took the matter more seriously than his friend, and fiercely assailed Jaggard in a postscript to the *Apology for Actors*, published the same year. It is thoroughly characteristic that Shakespear was more deeply affected by the local enclosures than by the literary piracy. It is true that his health had then broken down, and that the end was nearer.

As a matter of fact the title-page to the volume does not

explicitly state that the supplementary matter is by Shakespear; the sagacious Jaggard left it to be inferred. But in the Malone copy a cancel title occurs, as if in response to a complaint by Heywood, omitting Shakespear's name altogether.

The intimation to Greene has, owing to the obscurity of the MS. Diary of the latter in one place, been variously interpreted, and it is certainly more probable, on the whole, that Shakespear sided with the party favourable to enclosure of the fields. That view corresponds with the speaker's known solicitude to protect his own worldly interests, and it does not much weaken the value of the words spoken, where the leading point is the rescue of a few syllables out of all those, which those lips pronounced, and the presence of the business as a source of worry.

Heywood was unfortunate just about the same time in having some of his work appropriated, not by a publisher, but by a private individual otherwise unknown as a writer, Henry Austin, who brought out as his own a metrical Ovidian narrative, called the *Scourge of Venus*, in 1613, for which the true author severely (and appropriately), took him to task in the preface to his *Brazen Age*. Those were days when literary brigandage was in a fairly flourishing condition.

The poet lived through the whole of that striking period, which witnessed the acrimonious, foolish, and rather vulgar literary controversies of Greene, Harvey, and Nash, and of Jonson, Marston, and Dekker, and preserved an immovable silence and neutrality—an advised one, I apprehend, since in matters where his substantial interests were involved he was never remiss in vindicating himself. But he there employed the pen of his lawyer; and this attitude proceeded in some degree from temper; for at the outset of his career, when he was lampooned by Greene, he refrained even from any expression of feeling audible to us. Where, again, his rights had been invaded by Jaggard, he broke silence only when Heywood approached him, and then went no farther than to intimate his displeasure at an injustice, in

which another was involved. He offered a striking contrast to some of his contemporaries above-named. He did not even signify his philosophical indifference to detraction, as Marston does, with dubious sincerity, in the preface to *Parisitaster*, or the *Fawn*, 1606. He observed an inflexible reticence, to which the world was at liberty to give its own interpretation.

Shakespear, by virtue of his profession, spoke, as it were, with many tongues, almost with a greater number than have been assigned to Rumour, and to each of his *personæ* it was his function to allot his part. But even the greatest artists have their preferences, and throw into certain characters a preponderant measure of private sentiment and bias; and I think it was so here. Shakespear was most himself either in those lofty flights where, in the conscious pride of intellect, he has made Hamlet or Jaques reflect his own deep and exalted philosophy, or in the humbler scenes, where he has shown his kindly and humorous eye for those aspects of life, which were familiar to him in his youth and early manhood, and which he happily did not suffer to pass away with him.

A regrettable *lacuna* (how many, alas! there are) in the biographical sequence is the by no means improbable relations in later life between Shakespear and the family at Charlcote. That any youthful escapade of the poet should have rankled in the mind, or lingered in the remembrance, of the Lucys, when the offender, to whatever his misdemeanour might have actually amounted, had become so conspicuous as a writer and so affluent in his circumstances, is singularly unlikely, more particularly looking at the bookish and artistic tendencies of Sir Thomas himself. But there is nothing, it appears, but conjecture to assist us, unless we estimate at a higher rate the symptom of kindness on the part of the justice introduced into the scene between Shallow and Page, which I have cited.

It is perhaps to be remembered, that Lucy, dying in 1600, did not witness the more liberal feeling toward the stage and the

player, which set in with the Stuarts. Yet the friendly patronage of Southampton and the favourable sentiments of Southampton's sovereign must have reached his ears.

John Shakespear died prior to September 8, 1601, on which day his interment at Stratford is registered. How long he had been ill, and the immediate cause of death, appear to be alike undiscoverable, nor do we hear, whether his son was a witness to his last moments. In the third scene of the second act of *Henry V.* there is the excessively familiar passage, where Mrs. Quickly narrates the end of Falstaff; this, it is quite true, occurs in the 4^o of 1600, licensed on the 14th August in that year; but there is a singular omission, not supplied till 1623. I refer to the line or sentence most corruptly printed, till Theobald set it right in 1726: "and a' babbled of green fields." By whom the idea of the Knight's deathbed was suggested, it is impossible to say; and it is equally uncertain whether the wretched texts of the quartos were revised and completed by the poet himself, or from some more authentic transcript in existence, when the folio was in preparation. But the added words, so weightily improving the passage and picture, have inspired me with the suspicion, that, if the poet introduced them as an afterthought in some MS. copy unseen by us, he may have had an eye to his father, whose associations had been so peculiarly rural—more so than those of the Knight of the play.

If any conclusion is to be drawn from the gross misreading of the sentence in the folio of 1623, taken with the professed solicitude of the poet's fellows to do his memory justice, it is that the insertion was made in a very indistinct hand in the copy employed for the collective edition; but whether that hand was the author's or not, it would be fruitless to speculate.

The common voice of literary opinion dismisses the claim of the father of Shakespear to any share in the credit for his intellectual development, and we know too little of the prior paternal ancestors to be able to judge, whether the antecedent

generation betrayed any germ of the rich fruit to come to subsequent maturity in an individual of the stock, and then disappear for ever. There would have been nothing strange in the manifestation of abnormal qualities by the Shakespears, if Thomas Becon be correct in describing the Warwickshire folk in his *Jewel of Joy*, printed in the time of Edward VI., as distinguished by their intellectual superiority. But, on the other hand, in the mother, Mary Arden or Ardern, connected with the Kentish Ardens of Wye and Faversham, we indistinctly recognize a woman of character, whose family occupied a position superior to that of the Shakespears, and who was left at an early age to manage her own affairs. Her influence was discernibly one of blood and bent alone, and it was, as everybody is aware, far from being of an unusual nature. Mrs. Bond told Aubrey that Sir John Suckling the poet derived his vivacity and wit similarly from his mother, and that "his father was but a dull fellow." It is certainly deserving of a passing notice that Shakespear, in *As You Like It*, has followed Lodge in christening the woodland scene the Forest of Arden, very slight traces of which can have existed in that part of Warwickshire in his time. At least the tradition, however, remained; and the name was, *per se*, apt to be tempting, while the topographical question was quite a secondary one, since the excellent poet has placed a lioness in it. The guides to continental tourists must rely on a tolerable measure of credulous ignorance, when they place Shakespear's forest in Luxemburg; but they have the authority of the Rev. Joseph Hunter for it, and they are not much farther from the truth than Lodge, who placed it in the vicinity of Bordeaux!

John Shakespear imparted to his son one characteristic feature—his ostensible and perhaps (as I have pointed out) inherited partiality for litigation, and that practical strictness and even hardness in money matters, which fructified in the case of the poet better than in that of his predecessor, and which was instrumental in earning for him, at the hands of Robert Greene, the

trenchant sarcasm resident in the travestied sentence: "O tiger's heart wrapped in a *player's* hide!"

Nevertheless, John Shakespear, a sort of general factor and a municipal notability, was the true father of his son in one or two other less questionable respects. The latter was assuredly not under much intellectual obligation to his parent; but he may be taken to have derived from that source his practical temperament as an economist and a speculator in remunerative property, as well as his aptitude for accounts.

Our seeing faculty in regard to this rather dim personage is exclusively local, and in his capacity as an officer of the borough he performed certain duties, and superintended at one period—in his son's infancy and even down to his arrival at puberty—the public accounts. Facsimiles of entries in the Stratford books during his discharge of this trust are given by Mr. Lee; they are in the ordinary court hand of the period, and evidently the work of a scrivener; and Mr. Lee also presents us with specimens of his signature, and of those of Susanna Hall and Judith Shakespear, and Lady Barnard. The signature of the poet's father on p. 3 of the *Life* appears, however, to read *Signū Johis Shakespere*, and to be merely an attestation of the accompanying mark; and the same comment applies to the inscription of Judith at p. 226, even if the rudimentary characters Jhon Shaksper on p. 5, which substantially vary from those on p. 3, be authentic and not rather equally a voucher for the attendant symbol. The signatures of Gilbert Shakespear (p. 163), Susanna Hall (p. 227), and Lady Barnard (p. 229) are doubtless autographic. The educational standing of the family, so far as their handwriting go, was not inferior to that of their neighbours—we may surmise, in advance of it; and when we look at the signature of Michael Drayton from the same shire, and one of the very few, who enjoyed the intimate acquaintance of his countryman, it is not much more clerkly than that of Shakespear himself. The diffusion of the power of tracing the name on paper was stimu-

lated by the growing necessity, where property existed, of executing or attesting deeds ; and before people aspired to engage in correspondence, they gained sufficient dexterity with their pens to render a document valid in the eye of the law.

The lawyers of Stratford found a client in godly Mrs. Hall, to whom the humour had descended, and who in this respect justified the record on her monument, that she had in her something of her father. For in the lifetime of the latter, though after her marriage, we find this lady a party to an action for defamation of character, of which all that is known is that the charge against the plaintiff proved to be unfounded.

CHAPTER V.

Personal character of the poet. The proposed Grant of Arms. Manuscript remains. The surviving autographs. The Bodleian Ovid and the British Museum Montaigne. Absence of Letters. Possibility of future discoveries. The single communication to the Poet hitherto found. Family likeness in the handwriting of the Snitterfield Shakespears. Probable cause of the disappearance of Shakespear MSS. The Scriveners' Guild. Allusion by the poet to the scrivener. Deficiency of annotated copies of the Poems and Plays. And of tangible or valuable allusions to him in early books. Rise and Growth of Puritanism antagonistic to the preservation of the more popular literature. A Mr. Shakespear in the United States in 1784. Relatives. John Hall. Thomas Greene the Notary. His Poem on the Accession of James I. Uncertainty of his exact connection with Shakespear. Collected Edition of the Plays. Classification. Commendatory matter by Jonson, Milton, and others. Discontinuance of a call for the separate Plays after 1640. Rejection of the Poems as part of the Works. Periods of Neglect and Revival.

WHERE biographers and critics treat of the personal and literary character of Shakespear, he is almost invariably acclaimed as the poet of general humanity, as the friend no less than the painter of all men in all their fortunes and in all their moods. Nevertheless I recognise, rather than the writer who could sympathize with our frail and composite nature in every aspect, him, whose mighty and plastic intellect had the power beyond all others of coining into language each varying, fluctuating, and graduated feeling or passion of our race, and of finding an appropriate vehicle for the expression of every imaginable phase of sentiment and line of conduct—a mouthpiece for all throughout the whole range of nature, art, and thought in the individual, whom the part or speech best fitted. This great gift was due to his concurrent training and experience as an actor and a writer for the stage; and it is apparent that in his dramatic works, on which his fame rests, he presents

and marshals before us in turn an infinite diversity of characters with the nice differentiation of a true master. He was emphatically the actor turned author; and there is a passage in a book, apparently written by an Oxonian long after the poet's decease,* in which, after speaking of the story of Lucrece as one, which had been treated, the writer proceeds to refer to ACTORIDES as dead, as if he had in his mind a person, who combined, like Shakespear, the literary with the practical or professional side.

In other words, we really seem to have in him a man of pre-eminent genius, who added to his natural faculty as a writer a complete grasp of the technical business and wants of a theatre; and before him, as the prompter-in-chief, the whole world passed in course of time. But that, as a general proposition, we are to interpret the text of the plays in a personal sense, I am far indeed from believing or granting.

Nor am I a convert to the theory, or whatever it may be called, that Shakespear was a philanthropist or a humanitarian. We are accustomed to speak and think of him as the gentle Shakespear in the same sort of way that we do of Isaak Walton and Charles Lamb. But than such a parallel nothing can well be more delusive and improper. Shakespear was in himself the most extraordinary union of the man of genius with the man of business; the records of his friendly intercourse are of the scantiest nature; nearly all the few casual notices of him present him in the light of a peremptory stickler for his legal dues; and there is not a single example of a book from his pen having been offered as a gift to a relative, an acquaintance, or a patron. A copy of the *Sonnets*, which once belonged to Dr. Farmer, and is now among the Althorp treasures at Manchester, bears an early inscription elsewhere given; and one of the editions of *Hamlet*, 1611, has on the title: "For Mark Stapfer"; but neither of these memoranda is of direct significance.

* *Ovid's Ghost*, by Edwardus Fuscus, 12^o, 1657. It seems to be entirely unknown.

Such an unprecedented and barely credible absence of direct self-assertion, accompanied by such a mysterious apathy in the fate alike of his printed and manuscript work, renders it the less surprising that there should be a coterie prepared to dispute the existence of Shakespear as an author, and it is difficult to say how far this cult might have gone, had not, in addition to the documentary proof of his social and professional rank, the authorship of the plays and poems by him alone been so incontrovertibly established and, as it were, bound up together.

Randolph, who was born in 1605, and within whose circle there were many personal acquaintances of Shakespear, Jonson inclusive, in his free paraphrase of the *Plutus* of Aristophanes, apostrophizing the God of Wealth, says:—

“ Did not Will Summers break his wind for thee,
And Shakespeare therefore write his comedy ? ”

Which I do not adduce for any other reason than to fortify the foregoing view on the authority of a contemporary, as it is perhaps the first and only testimony of the kind.

Halliwell-Phillipps, in his *Outlines*, has more than once adverted to the action of the Shakespears, just about the point of time, when New Place was acquired, in applying for an official coat of arms. The poet himself nowhere appears in the matter; he was arguably neutral on such a subject; but in 1596 and 1599 the heralds (Dethick and Camden) drafted grants to his father, and based their action on the reputed services of ancestors to Henry VII. Nothing definite was ever accomplished, and it was then, as it yet is, the prevailing view, that these historical pretensions were unfounded. I acquit Shakespear of having advanced them, and of greatly caring which way the case ended; but the authorities, who lent their countenance to this and quite a number of similar applications, did not escape censure from one of their own body (York Herald), who in no measured terms condemned the growing tendency to find heraldic cognisances for new aspirants. My own feeling is that the father and mother—she a

woman of family and separate estate—took the initiative, and perhaps prevailed on their son to defray the preliminary charges.

The Shakespears sprang from the yeomanry, and had had originally among them at Snitterfield and the vicinity a good estate in land; and the Ardens were of similar standing. John Shakespear not improbably carried with him to his new home at Stratford certain gentilitious instincts, which, had his personal fortunes continued to be prosperous, might have prompted him, independently of his son, to solicit coat-armour. In one document the poet either names himself, or is named by the scribe, *generosus*; in the Sonnets, written so long prior to publication, we already meet with the actor, ashamed, if not weary, of his calling; and I admit it as a distinct possibility that the poet may have gone so far as to acquiesce in the step in 1596, and to be willing to pay for the honour, as Heralds' College deemed it to be—the unmerited one, as worshipful Mr. York Herald accounted it. But the loss of his son tended to render him even more indifferent to the issue.

I must avow that I am intolerant of the endless repetition of nonsensical stories about the poet in the direction of jests and *impromptus*. The Combe epitaph, whatever its true history may be, can have no Shakespearian relevance beyond the possibility that the composition was mentioned or even shown to him. John Combe died in 1614, recollecting Shakespear in his will in the shape of a legacy of £5, a sum equal to £30 at least of our currency; their acquaintance had been of some duration; and there is no proof either that he was an usurer, or that the slightest difference had ever existed between the two men. That the rhyme was composed at or near the time is proved by its insertion in Richard Brathwaite's *Remains after Death*, printed in 1618; and there is an indication that a copy of it on a slip of paper was once attached to the Combe monument in the church by the rhymester himself or someone else. It is sincerely to be hoped that such trash may cease to find a place in future biographies.

Who less than Shakespeare would have taken up his pen for such a purpose at any period, more particularly under the known circumstances and at such a date?

The autographic remains are scanty and unsatisfying enough, and are familiar as they are scanty. They are limited to the three signatures to the will, the two to the Blackfriars deed and counterpart, the inscriptions in the Aldine *Ovid* of 1502 and in the English *Montaigne* of 1603, and a putative one inserted in a copy of the second folio of the Plays. Of the official examples, five in number, the genuineness is unimpeachable. Of the remaining three the history is more or less known, and the character is a matter of opinion—even of doubt. The *Ovid* was acquired for the Bodleian about thirty years since, under the keepership of Dr. Coxe, at a London auction; of its antecedents nothing is recovered. If it be authentic, its value is peculiar, for it is a copy of a classic, of which Shakespear was evidently fond, and with which he was as evidently acquainted; and the writing is, I judge, earlier than that in the *Montaigne*, and consequently firmer. Its identification is certainly supported and strengthened by the memorandum at the foot of the title-page, of which I annex a facsimile. But I enter farther into this question a little elsewhere.

The autograph on the flyleaf of a copy of the version of *Montaigne* by Florio, 1603, purchased for the British Museum in 1838, assuming it to be right, and made at the time of publication, is nine years prior to the Blackfriars conveyance and thirteen prior to the testamentary subscriptions; and the faintness of the final letter of the surname, as if the ink had failed, or the writer had hesitated, whether he should add the terminal, is a circumstance in its favour. The characters are traced with greater decision than those of 1612 and 1616, but are more tremulous than the lines of the *Ovid*. But it is by no means destitute of a pedigree, even of a fairly respectable one. There is certainly no information, how or when the book, already so enriched, came into

OVIDII METAMORPHOSEON
LIBRI QVINDECIM.



This little Booke of Ouid was given to me
by W Hall who sayd it was once Will
Shakespeares

En
1682



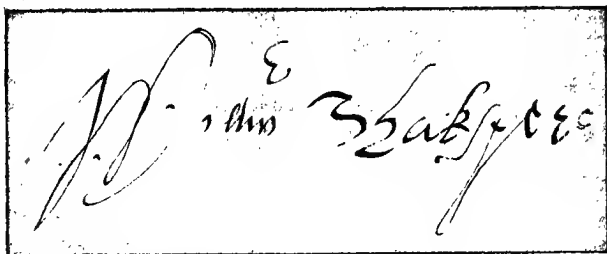
the hands of the Rev. Edward Patteson of Smethwick, near Birmingham; it seems to be certain that it was before 1780; the representatives of the poet may have lost interest in the books even before they became extinct about 1806; and there is a probability that any would drift to the nearest large centre. Although Mr. Patteson was accustomed to shew his prize to his private circle as a curiosity, it awakened no public attention, till it passed into the hands of a son, who resided near London, and fell under the notice of experts. Ever since it has been the subject of fluctuating opinion. But the place of original recovery—so near to Stratford—the existence of the signature from the outset, and the insufficiency of motive, when the unique value was still to be appreciated, are points not readily combated; and I think that, after a perusal of Sir Frederic Madden's pamphlet, printed in 1838, many will concur, that the burden of proof lies on the sceptic.

The relic first brought to light by Ward the actor,* father-in-law of Roger Kemble, in the eighteenth century, when there was no keen feeling on such a subject distantly approaching that at present entertained, and when, as in the case of the *Montaigne*, no one surmised the immense rarity of such an autograph, was taken by me, on my original view of it in a photographic facsimile, to be a very clumsy endeavour to copy the writing of the poet. But a comparison with the second signature on p. 54 prompts me to regard this as belonging to the same date and physical conditions.

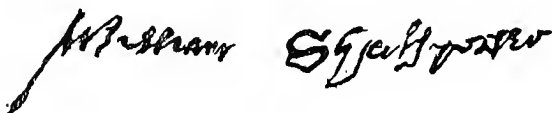
It must be tolerably obvious that the Bodleian *Ovid* is differently situated. For, assuming, as we may, the certificate of 1682 at the foot of the page to be authentic, we appear to have a fair warrant for concluding that the signature above is that of the only Shakespear, with whom posterity is concerned, and the calligraphy is near enough to the other extant specimens, considering the likelihood that the book was an early purchase, and the lines traced, when the hand of the writer was steadier, and under circumstances, which left less room for fanciful flourishes.

* Ward died in 1773.

The Ward example, unless I am mistaken, speaks for itself. The written characters accompanying the Museum copy of Florio's *Montaigne* stand on other ground. They are either genuine, or they are a deliberate and mischievous forgery. I give facsimiles of the two in immediate juxtaposition for comparison:



Signature belonging to Florio's *Montaigne*, 1603.



Signature attached to the Ward second folio, 1632.

A certain correlation is traceable between the extant signatures in documents and books, tending to some extent to support their common authenticity, and, which is not less important, to identify them all with one and the same individual. I am looking at the forms of a few of the letters, and I remark more especially the downstroke in the *W* of the Bodleian *Ovid* and in the *W* and *m* of the subscription on the third folio of the will (*William* and *me*), no less than the peculiar full point equally present in the *W* of the christian name in the *Montaigne*, written

in presumed good health in or about 1603, and in that which forms part of the signature at the end of the will, written in sickness in 1616. The scrawls on the first and second folios are almost destitute of significance for the reasons already assigned. There is a certain heredity in handwriting; and I would call attention to the subscription of Mrs. Hall (Susanna Shakespear) to a deed, which occurs in the *Outlines* (i., 254), as if the witness had studied examples of her father's peculiar hand to serve the very limited and occasional purposes, to which she probably applied the art.

Of letters written by the poet there is not a vestige. Those addressed to him are represented by an unit—the note from Richard Quiney; it is contained in a scrap of paper, which renders its survival marvellous. But of course he sent or received hundreds in the course of his busy and many-sided life, and there is even a disposition to credit the tradition that James I. expressed in writing certain gracious sentiments toward one, whose creations must have so often delighted him and his consort, The salient point about this reputed communication is that, if it was in the hands of Sir William Davenant, it almost certainly escaped the vandalism of the Stratford representatives, and there is the faintest hope in the world that some obscure repository may even unconsciously hold the inestimable relic. Lintot, who republished the Poems in 1710 as an appendix to Rowe's edition of the Plays, describes it, however, as then *lost*. I shall copy from Lintot's advertisement what he has to tell us under this head: "I cannot," he says, "omit inserting a passage of Mr. Shakespeare's Life, very much to his Honour, and very remarkable, which was either unknown, or forgotten by the Writer of it [prefixed to Rowe's edition.] That most learn'd Prince and great Patron of Learning, King James the First, was pleas'd with his own Hand to write an amicable Letter to Mr. Shakespeare; which Letter, tho' now lost, remain'd long in the hands of Sir William Davenant, as a credible Person now living can testify." Truly the most valu-

able of all royal letters ever penned, and what an omitted opportunity for the Irelands, the Jordans, and the Colliers!

When James Cooke the surgeon was at Stratford in 1643, he saw Mrs. Hall, who shewed him MSS., not of her father, but of that infinitely less egregious individual her husband, Master Doctor Hall, "*medicus peritissimus*." Whether there were any papers of Shakespear at New Place then, no one can say, The original copies of the plays may not have survived their writer for a reason elsewhere offered; nor is it easy to tell, whether such printed books as he possessed were kept in London or in the country.

But such extraordinary discoveries have taken place within an easily measurable period, and the response of owners of the most precious relics of the past appears to be so casual and imperfect, that there is no actual limit to possibilities, at least, of an eventual extension of our knowledge even in this immediate direction, which so many modern revelations have approached with almost tiresome and irritating proximity without realizing the object most at heart. In the face, however, of the perfectly recent disinterment of a quarto manuscript, preserving early copies of numerous hitherto unknown letters of Jonson and Chapman, of which a full account was communicated to the press, there is a sort of forlorn hope that some such biographical clues and lights, necessarily differentiated by personal circumstances, may lurk in a similar manner a little below the surface, awaiting the supreme moment when they are to be transformed by alchemical eyes from inarticulate lumber in loft or charter-chest into solid and proud documentary vouchers.

We have, however, to set against such a prospect the singular absence of self-assertion on the part of Shakespear, his constitutional indifference to his work and his fame, and, so far as gift-copies of his Poems or Plays are concerned, a diffidence of the appreciation of his genius by his contemporaries, or an unconsciousness by them of the supreme value to be set hereafter on

such memorials. Whether the poet ever presented any of his books to those about him, or the latter theirs to him, we know not. It might at least have been expected that the copies of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* dedicated to Lord Southampton would have been preserved in the hands of descendants.

The failure to recover such now priceless treasures is so far from being restricted to Shakespear that it is a general incidence, and the occasional exceptions, such as Jonson, Drayton, and Chapman, really prove the rule. Of how few of our literary glories have we heirlooms in the shape of papers on which their very eye and hand have once rested!

The ordinary student must have long become aware that there were living, in and about the days of the poet, other William Shakespears; but of these scarcely any calligraphic examples appear to have been produced. One of them, probably a Snitterfield one, may be answerable for the signature in the Ward volume above mentioned. They might have been esteemed of slight worth; their absence renders that of efforts in penmanship by their greater namesake less unintelligible, while the omission to preserve even such correspondence as may or must have passed between Shakespear and some of his more distant connections and friends is easily imputable to an unconsciousness of its ulterior estimation. The solitary note written by Richard Quiney to the dramatist has evidently had the narrowest escape from destruction; it is on the borderland of evanescence. Taking a nearly contemporary case—that of Montaigne, a man of fortune and political distinction, a high municipal officer, and the personal acquaintance of three kings—one between whom and his large and varied circle thousands of letters arguably passed in the course of thirty years; and what is the fact? Thirty-five epistolary documents, some saved by having served as prefatory matter to books, some by having been bound up by the recipients among family papers, have by the unwearied researches of editors and antiquaries been recovered in three centuries; and of his

father, also an eminent public character, we do not possess in a literary sense a line. In the unique case of Edward Alleyn we see how the institution of his noble College in his lifetime favoured the safeguard of his MSS. and printed books; but as a general rule all such remains have suffered the same destiny.

While we may find ourselves tolerably agreed in characterizing the scanty autographic footprints of the elder Shakespear as unusually barbarous and illiterate, a collation of them with the signatures of Henry Shakespear of Snitterfield (Halliwell-Phillipps, ii., 211), and (I may perhaps add) that of the William Shakespear in the Ward folio, on the one hand, and that of William Shakespear the poet on the other, establishes to my satisfaction a pedigree and kindred. There was an ostensible forward movement even at Stratford, among men of business and more or less culture, in the present direction toward the latter part of the sixteenth century; but the other sex did not participate in the advantage, if we may judge from the ladies at New Place. Such persons as the Quineys and Greene, the notary and town clerk, rose above the normal bucolic standard, and Greene, as we perceive, went so far as to launch a volume of verse. We are enabled to judge to some extent by what method boys were initiated at schools, such as that at Stratford, into the art of calligraphy; for copy-books exist, of the poet's time, containing examples for the use of pupils. The earliest which has fallen under my personal notice is dated 1591; and some of its illustrations tempt us to suspect where a certain Stratford scholar learned to form his hand.

The almost total disappearance of Shakespear MSS. of any kind is traceable to several agencies, of which the foremost were fires, accident, neglect. The Globe was consumed in 1613, when a large accumulation of documents, correspondence, plays, and other archives had had ample time to form. There were periodical conflagrations at Stratford—of some of which we do not hear, other sufficiently destructive and ruinous to attract official notice. Accident and neglect are capable, where no importance is attached

to property, of accomplishing any prodigies. The poet himself is figured by me as a man, who discerned in a book nothing beyond literary material, thrown aside, if it was barren of fruit, or when it had yielded such fruit as it might have; and so it fared *a fortiori* with letters, when the subject-matter had been dismissed, and with plays, which proved impracticable, and for which the writers failed to apply. A solution of the evanescence of all the dramatic work of Shakespear himself in an autograph shape seems to lie in the simple fact, that it was delivered to scriveners for transcription, and then deliberately destroyed. I observe that Mr. Sidney Lee refers with almost equal disrespect to Thomas Thorpe, the publisher of the *Sonnets*, and to the "scrivener's hireling," whom he guesses to have handed over to the publisher the MSS. copies of the works, which he published. This is a purely gratuitous assertion, and more or less grossly improbable from the strict regulations, by which the members of the calling were bound. The biographer of Shakespear might surely have used the scrivener more advantageously to illustrate our sad plight in regard to original autographs of the poet. The sole apparent chance—and it is a very remote one—of recovering any autograph manuscript of the plays is the possible survival of a copy made for the actors with corrections or even additions by the poet.

The deplorable corruptions in the early impressions of the plays may on the present supposition be carried farther back than the original typographer. The fault lay with the unintelligible MSS. and the failure even of an experienced copyist to decipher certain words or sentences. Let us reflect on the uncertainty as to mere signatures of the poet and on the different conclusions upon the exact letters traced by his hand, and then let us imagine a quire or two of paper occupied by writing of the same type, with the added features of correction and interlineation. The inference can only be, that no holograph MSS. survived Shakespear, or even survived the date of their translation by a member of the Scriveners' Guild into legible characters, of which the actors could make use.

It is extremely doubtful whether the original autographs of the Poems and Sonnets produced in the decade 1593—1603 were preserved; and the fire at the Globe in 1613, after the retirement to Stratford, or the indifference of the family, when he died, to personal memorials, may be accountable for the absence of letters, in the present case, as one may fancy, more likely to have accumulated from the long and systematic abode of the poet at a distance from relations and neighbours.

Shakespear is presumed to have used the Court, not the Italian, style, and his manuscript copy must have so much the more demanded the assistance of the scrivener, whose special aptitude was the conversion of papers in the former character into fair copy for official or other practical purposes. An experienced member of the Scriveners' Gild would have had slight difficulty in deciphering the holograph of the poet, and probably carried it from the theatre or lodging to his office for treatment; and it is tolerably easy to see, on the one hand, how useless to the actors and prompter the original was likely to be, and how its destruction, if not instantaneous, was merely a question of time.

The dramatist was better acquainted than his most recent biographer with the province and place of the scrivener and his wide range of duties. In *Richard III.*, iii., 6, he makes one enter with a fair copy of the indictment of Lord Hastings:—

“Here is the indictment of the good lord Hastings,
Which in a set hand fairly is engross'd,
That it may be to-day read o'er in Paul's;
And mark how well the sequel hangs together:
Eleven hours I have spent to write it over,
For yesternight by Catesby was it sent me;
The precedent was full as long a doing;
And yet within these five hours Hastings liv'd—”

Such a character as is here portrayed may have had hundreds of folios of Shakespear's own writing to copy “in a set hand fairly engross'd;” and when the original was thus superseded, it was, it may be more than feared, cast away as useless.

When we have concluded such a survey as is possible of the private career of this great Englishman, and have observed how in one leading respect he was singularly situated, it might be unwise to pronounce his life an unhappy one without pausing to consider his moral and intellectual temperament and his autonomous faculty. Shakespear was by no means exempt from the troubles, which wait on humanity. Amid his astonishing worldly successes he lost in turn his only son, Hamnet (1596)—a name, by the way, found among the Haringtons in the early years of the sixteenth century*—his father (1601) and his mother (1608), of whom he had had it in his power to see so little in later years, his two brothers, Edmund (1607) and Richard (1613), both under thirty, and the former the sole relative, who displayed any congenial talent; and beyond this series of bereavements there was the unsympathetic attitude—or more—of those, who remained. We are not to hasten to the conclusion, that the poet looked on such private incidents without emotion; yet his mind was of a cast, which was eminently capable of fortifying itself against personal sorrow by immersion in professional engagements at a distance.

Of John Hall very little seems to be recoverable. He is traced to Acton in Middlesex; but he must have settled at Stratford very early in the seventeenth century. Acton was, at all events, somewhat later a stronghold of puritanism; and Hall carried with him to his Warwickshire home a powerful bias in that direction. There was in the time of Elizabeth a surgeon of the same name, a member of the Barber-Surgeons' Guild, and in 1565 a resident in Coleman Street, in the City of London. He was also a man of religious character, and wrote several small books of a devout complexion, besides one of a professional class, all enumerated by the present writer. It is little more than a suggestion on my part, in the absence of any sort of more distinct clue, that the earlier Hall may have been the father of Shake-

* *Plumpton Correspondence*, p. 207.

spear's son-in-law. He has been described as of Maidstone; but the local histories omit to mention his name. The resemblance in two or three points might render farther inquiry desirable, since the interest of Hall of Stratford in the New Place estate became so prominent, and it was probably from him that Susanna Shakespear imbibed her reputed piety, if he did not go so far in his acquaintance with the female members both before and after his marriage as to communicate to them his own religious tenets and prejudices.

When one beholds this man in one's mind's eye, who saw and knew so much, this dull professional expert and bigoted non-conformist, who is explicitly stated to have been most famous at Stratford, who kept a note-book of cases in Latin and stopped short at entering his relative's, reducing his work thereby to the vicinity of waste paper, one can only ejaculate: "O the irony of fate!"*

Hall, or at any rate his editor and translator Cooke of Warwick, as we too well know, omits all mention of the precise circumstances attending the last moments of Shakespear. There can have been no sympathy between the two men; there is no indication that the physician entertained even an approximate idea of the genius of his father-in-law. How or why should he have done so? Men, who were infinitely better qualified to form an opinion on the subject, formed a very imperfect one; and where this famous gentleman—Hall, not Shakespear—has occasion to refer to the poet's daughter, she is only "Mrs. Hall of Stratford MY WIFE." There is not a hint of her relationship to somebody else. To think, when we contemplate the professional gibberish and jargon, with which he fills his volume—and Cooke did not give us the whole—that

* The Reverend John Ward, *alias* Dryasdust, Vicar of Stratford, wrote in the second half of the seventeenth century a jejune and pointless Diary (first printed, 8°, 1839), in which it can only be said, that we gain a trifle more than from Hall; but his information is of slender value.

he did not set down a few lines, which would have been worth all the rest a million-fold !

Apart from the Hall and Quiney families, and coming in contact with the poet in a different manner, was that Thomas Greene, whose name recurs in the present narrative more than once, and who, no doubt correctly, claimed the illustrious poet as a connexion. Greene was by inference a notary public, and collaterally or otherwise, according to Mr. Halliwell-Phillips, town-clerk, whose services his so-called cousin sometimes secured, when anything had to be done in his frequent and long absences from Stratford, but whose cousinhood does not appear to have extended to intellectual resemblance ; an individual of the same names buried at Stratford, March 6, 1589-90, was probably his father. We have all heard of the insuperable repugnance of Shakespear himself to the composition of occasional or panegyrical tributes arising out of temporary and special circumstances, and of this being imputed to him almost as a trait of disloyalty. But as if it were in the fitness of things that some voice out of Stratford should be lifted up to hail the new Cæsar, when James I. succeeded Elizabeth in 1603, cousin Greene stepped forward, and framed a pæan, which he not too unassumingly christened *A Poet's Vision and a Prince's Glory*. The adventurous author was naturally led to place his MS. in the hands of William Leake at the White Greyhound in St. Paul's Churchyard ; he signalizes himself on the title as Thomas Greene Gentleman, a pretension neglected by his relative ; but the publisher gives no address, and the excessive rarity of the volume favours the surmise, that it was printed at Greene's expense. It is not more foolish than other contemporary trifles of the kind, and is in rhyming hexameters. As very few eyes have beheld a copy, it may be worth while to transcribe the opening lines :—

“When Hesperus, the Harbinger of night,
Had iustly ordred eu'rie burning light,
My solitary chamber I forsooke,
And musing went vnto a pleasant brooke ;

Where, sitting down vpon a hillocke by,
 To steale delight with a more quiet eye,
 Soft drizling droppes vpon my face did fall,
 Which sweeter were then that wee *Nectar* call—"

What did cousin Shakespear think of this glorious effusion? Did it stir his risible muscles? Or did he commend cousin Greene as a bard of promise, who might at last shed a lustre on the family? Anyhow cousin Greene was not discouraged from sacrificing a second time to the Muses; for, two years later, we see him sit down to indite a copy of verses to accompany their common friend Drayton's Poems on their first appearance in a collective shape.

Greene, however, independently of his poetical leaning, imbibed from intercourse with Shakespear, Drayton, and others, may be fairly presumed to have been of essential service to the poet in a practical way, and their friendship was, no doubt, of lifelong duration. He is the only individual, resident at Stratford, of whom we hear as possessing qualifications for representing anyone in the nature of a client.

The most remarkable, and in a way most serious, difficulty in relation to Greene of Stratford seems to be that the exact way in which he became the kinsman of the poet, has not so far transpired. It was presumably on the maternal side; and a farther point inviting elucidation, though not immediately touching the present essay, is the by no means unlikely consanguinity between Thomas Greene and John Greene the eminent actor, the latter himself a playwright, an applauded performer in his own comedy of *Greene's Tu Quoque*, and a clever epigrammatist.

The period of neglect—the long night preceding the break of a new day—during which thousands of now priceless *editiones principes* must have silently perished,* may be said to have set in, when the circle or generation which beheld and welcomed the

* From indifference, rather than over-study; for even imperfect or damaged copies of the majority have not survived.

first folio, had died away, and when the Civil War paralysed all theatrical operations, and discouraged literary enterprize. To a limited extent, and in a narrow zone, the influence of Davenant, Milton and his nephews, and Dryden tended to preserve the Shakespearian tradition and the remembrance of the glories of the old stage, and with these the fame of the poet underwent an almost total eclipse. For the possession by his plays of the later theatre was subject to conditions destructive of their integrity; they were improved and refined, as the phrase went, to suit the audiences of the Restoration and the Augustan era of Queen Anne; and his lyrics were only to be found in anthologies, side by side with those of writers of second and third-rate rank. Even in the Dictionary of Edward Philips, on the appearance of a new edition by Kersey in 1696, the pictorial frontispiece, with its group of representative portraits, does not include that of Shakespear, as if he had then ceased to be viewed as a master of our language and an ornament of our literature. Then onward to the eighteenth century revival—a very gradual one—what scope there was for the conversion of every kind of record into waste!

In the Epistle before an abridgment by James Wright of Dugdale's *Monasticon*, 1693, he alludes to two of the most famous writers in England, Dugdale and Shakespear, "both Williams;" and he consistently puts the poet second in order.

Not merely among the generation or so which succeeded him in order of time, but among those who had at least the opportunity of seeing, if not of addressing him, does the comparative silence, the inadequate appreciation, manifest itself, and we find ourselves destitute of any copies of the poems and plays carrying evidence of contemporary study and approval, or the reverse, in the sense and way in which annotated examples have descended to us of the works of others. It might almost seem that his age reciprocated or resented the sublime, perhaps cynical, indifference of the poet, so far as anyone can judge, to the censure

or applause of others, nor are we in possession of the slightest hint, with the one or two exceptions which have been noted, what views he entertained about attempts during his own lifetime to treat subjects already handled by himself, as, for instance, Christopher Brooke's *Ghost of Richard the Third*, 1614, a metrical composition assuming to unfold more than had been hitherto shown "either in Chronicles, Plays, or Poems," or the prose *History of Hamlet*, 1608, or the novel founded by Wilkins on *Pericles*, printed in the same year. The means of resolving some of these secrets may have perished, with the thousands of early English books and papers, which have returned to dust unseen and ungleaned. Yet, so long as we have under our eyes the copy of Gascoigne, which belonged to Gabriel Harvey, and the copy of Spenser which belonged to Michael Drayton, with their MSS. notes, need we despair?—more especially regarding such unhopèd-for recoveries as the Letters of Jonson and Chapman, however in themselves insignificant, and of the Poems of James I., which lay two or three centuries at Oxford unrecognized. It may be the lot of literary mineralogists to achieve yet greater things, and how often the ore has been found to lie only a spade deep!

The rise and development of Puritanism was not the only factor in achieving almost the nearest approach possible to the extermination of the more purely popular Elizabethan and Jacobean literature. That movement was powerfully aided by the spread of sectarianism and dissent, and the advance to the front of a narrow, bigoted, and sombre school of authors which throughout the rural districts at all events, and in all centres of religious intolerance, lifted up their voices against profane and voluptuous writings. Men and women began to acquire and cherish the *Practice of Piety*, the *Temple*, the *Synagogue*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the *Holy War*, and thousands of other pious and enthusiastic effusions, which gradually effaced the works of the playwrights and lyrists all over the country, and from the pulpit and in private

conference with members of their flocks, pastors discouraged the perusal of all witless and unholy devices, into the number of which the amatory works of Shakespear indisputably entered.

When Bagford and Ames formed their assemblages of title-pages and fragments, we perceive, in wading through the huge volumes, the classes of books, which had then survived in the largest numbers; the bulk are just what one at the present time least seeks. If the really valuable records were withdrawn and bound up separately, they would not occupy a very large space. Of first editions of Shakespear there are none, nor did a later biblioclast, Sir John Fenn, meet with any, for as he remorselessly mutilated certain other Elizabethan remains, now approximately ascertained to be unique, he would not have hesitated to immolate an *editio princeps* of the *Passionate Pilgrim* or *Hamlet*.

It has been stated, and it is indeed a notorious fact, that the descendants of some branch at least of the Shakespear family, in common with his own immediate kindred, embraced the tenets of Puritanism; and when we perceive the ostensible tendency of the poet himself to keep aloof from his contemporary environments, it altogether becomes worth while to refer to the gentleman, "Mr. Shakespear," whom the Hazlitts met at Perth Amboy in the United States in 1784. What most struck them there, a family diary says, "was a puritanical old gentleman of the name of Shakespeare," on whom they looked with great reverence, thinking perhaps that with the name he inherited the powers of the great dramatist; and the diarist affirms, that his features reminded her of the latter. "He was dressed in a sad-coloured suit, was reserved and stately, and took his coffee with the air of a prince in disguise." *

There is a little more in this passage and circumstance than may at first sight suggest itself; for it thoroughly falls in with my conception of the self-containing humour of the man, whose fame drew attention to his namesake—this early settler in the States, of

* *Four Generations of a Literary Family*, by W. C. Hazlitt, 1897, i., 32.

whose antecedents it is to be regretted that we hear nothing. Was he the representative of a pilgrim father? Was he of the Warwickshire stock? Was this reserve, this reticence, a prevailing trait?

Collective editions of dramatists were little in vogue about 1616. The monumental honour which Jonson saw erected to his friend, and helped to render somewhat more perfect, had been raised to himself in his life-time, and to him alone. A publisher had been found to speculate in a first instalment of the Works in the very year in which the world lost Shakespear, but even in this exceptional case nearly a quarter of a century elapsed before the whole undertaking was completed (1616—41), and the author was not spared to witness the conclusion. Nor did the much-applauded writings of Beaumont and Fletcher receive a similar homage till 1647; and the Plays of Marlowe, Peele, Greene, Heywood, Middleton, Massinger, and Shirley remained inedited down to modern days. Certain favourite productions, dramatic or lyrical, were kept in print, and passed through successive impressions; there is quite a series of posthumous issues of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. But the cost and risk of the folio format, where a large sale was required, at 20s. at least, to reimburse the bookseller, seems in the case of the drama to have long deterred the trade, while edition upon edition of Burton's *Anatomy*, and scores of theological and mystical works, were brought out without hesitation and without danger. With respect to the Shakespear of 1623, however, there were peculiar difficulties apart from the outlay, for several of the Plays had never been committed to type, and others required careful emendation. We must not say that the volume, as we hold it in our hands to-day, is not excessively creditable to those who made themselves responsible for it, for we are of opinion that the editors fulfilled their sacred trust conscientiously and faithfully; and it is, because the critical superintendence and selection of texts were not points then adequately appreciated, that the precious and unique book,

holding within its covers matter nowhere else extant in type or MS., cannot be treated as more than the foundation of an edition aspiring to completeness and precision, and that the original quartos, little esteemed in 1623, have to be enlisted as prompters and coadjutors.

There are two clear and broad divisions, not merely practicable, but expedient for critical and other purposes, in the first collective impression of the Plays: namely, those dramas which had been committed separately to type at anterior dates, and those which did not appear till 1623. On the whole, the texts of the latter group are far purer than those of the reprints from the quartos with or without castigation on the part of the author or of an editor unnamed. This point raises the interesting question as to the nature of the material or printer's copy, which supplied the basis for so much of this historical volume. In their Epistle to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, Heming and Condell say: "We have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." The term "papers" might signify autographs or transcripts—almost indubitably we should understand the latter; and at any rate the reference is to unprinted texts which, if they were scrivener's copies, would naturally be transfers from lost originals, bearing the final corrections of the dramatist. For the relative accuracy of the plays first published in 1623 the world may therefore be indebted to the care exercised by such as had the task of converting Shakespear's possibly not too lucid characters into something more intelligible to the compositors. The history of the transition of the pieces previously printed in an imperfect shape to their places in the folio, and of the peremptory need of their co-operation in the process of forming an acceptable text, is too obscure to make its discussion serviceable. It is a part of the subject beset by inconsistencies and contradictions. We are plainly reduced to the position of adopting an eclectic principle at the hazard of unwittingly reversing in places the ultimatum of the person best entitled to decide.

The measure of editorial attention and vigilance in the conduct of the folio of 1623 through the press was anyhow sensibly governed and stimulated by the friendly and intelligent zeal of Shakespear's two fellows, whom he had kindly remembered in his will, and who stood to him in better stead than the folks at New Place.

The panegyrical matter attached to the first and second folio editions of the Plays, as well as that scattered among separate publications, partakes of the same inadequate quality, from a modern point of view, and from our comparative critical standard. There were throughout these complimentary tributes, with a willingness and desire to do justice to the departed writer, symptoms that hardly a single contributor grasped the full bearings and extent of his thesis, or the vast difference between himself and the man whom he undertook to commend. Such a deficiency of insight is noticeable even in the verses by Jonson and Milton, because these two witnesses were the most eminent among all those who united to transmit their testimony to us; and the case of Jonson is the more striking from his closer and more direct contact with the object of his praise. The metrical and prose estimates, the latter in the *Discoveries*, seem as hearty and genuine as they are unsatisfactory; and Jonson screens himself behind the immaturity of his judgment. He was in 1623 fifty years of age—either a fool or a physician, as the saying goes. His lines embrace within their limits a homage truly magnificent; but they scarcely make a serious attempt to discriminate or define the noble and peculiar gifts of the poet, who had been associated with him in so many ways. They are too long, too diffuse, too classical. But they enshrine a noble and unforgettable sentiment, where Jonson pronounces his great friend “a Monument without a Tomb.” As poetry, they are forsooth indifferent enough.

The familiar and often-quoted lines by Milton on Shakespear, commencing:—

“What needs my Shakespear for his honour’d bones
The labour of an age in piled stones?”

seem to be borrowed, so far as the opening and cue go, from a passage in the play of *Tancred and Gismunda*, 1591, where the Second Chorus is made to say :—

“Queen Artemisia thought an heap of stones
(Although they were the wonder of that age)
A worthless grave, wherein to rest the bones
Of her dear lord——” *

The author of *Lycidas and Comus* had perhaps fallen in with the old drama, and had assimilated the image. But it was the same all round. Everybody took what suited him from everybody else, and made what he could of it. The result depended on the dexterity or the power of the taker.

The cases are sufficiently rare, where, during the interval between the closing of the theatres and the Restoration, the dramas of Shakespear were demanded even in book-form. The exceptions are the *Merchant of Venice*, 1652, *Lear and Othello*, 1655, and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, of which last no copy is known, although it is advertized as on sale in 1656 in quarto with dramas by Jonson, Shirley and others.

The exclusion from the folio of 1623, which so far formed a precedent for those of 1632, 1663, and 1685, of the non-dramatic writings, was neither an oversight nor an accident. It proceeded from a deliberate and correct persuasion on the part of the editors, that the Plays represented the true life’s work of the author, and that the rest, if not disadvantageous, was at all events immaterial, to his fame. Such an opinion of course by no means contemplates the often exquisite and delicious songs scattered through the dramatic series, and which are as unexcelled as that for their beauty and wisdom.

The state of Shakespearian knowledge, among such as ought

* Hazlitt’s *Dodsley*, vii. 48.

best to have known, was so low in or about 1710, that Lintot the publisher, in editing the lyrics to accompany the then recent edition of the plays by Rowe, informs us that "it is generally agreed he dy'd about the year 1616," and he makes this circumstance a ground for holding that the *Passionate Pilgrim*, having been printed seventeen years before his death, *was published by himself*. Extrinsically or bibliographically speaking, the languid competition for this species of literature had a duration of a century and a half (1600-1750), and within that period the *Pilgrim* was bought for three halfpence in a volume with *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Sonnets* for a shilling. Let us not shed tears; as they were acquired, so they were estimated—so that the prophecy of Thorpe in 1609 as to the usurious rise in the value of these productions was very far from being speedily fulfilled.

I incidentally note elsewhere that we have contemporary authority for believing that the price of issue of the *Sonnets* in 1609 was five silver pence of the day, a penny in excess of the sum probably charged for the quarto plays, which generally extend to the same number of pages—some of them to more. But the *Pilgrim* of 1599, making only 30 duodecimo leaves against 40 quarto leaves of the *Sonnets*, was scarcely estimated at more than twopence at the time of publication, nearly double what its eighteenth century purchaser gave for it and the *Venus and Adonis* together. In or about 1680 Narcissus Luttrell went to the length of paying a shilling for the *Sonnets*, more than twice the published price; but in 1687 the first folio of the Plays, brought out in 1623 at 20s., had temporarily receded to 14s. These are samples of the call for such books by generations not unwilling to pay heavy amounts for volumes, which at present command scarcely any amount whatever.

The earliest symptoms of a consciousness among readers and thinkers, that the writings of Shakespear preserved some measure of vitality and permanence, are to be sought in occasional

references to him and them in such works and authors as I have indicated. During the seventeenth century and the commencing years of the eighteenth there existed a minority, which could point to the Plays on their bookshelves, and from time to time turned over the leaves with a sort of vague interest without any definite persuasion or any literary gain, but with whom it was a more or less distinct tradition, that here was a volume, of which some of the finest judges had formerly spoken with affectionate regard. There was not any actual school of verbal criticism previous to the days of Sir Thomas Hanmer, unless we are to receive as such the remarks and suggestions made by the second Earl of Rochester, and found among his papers after his death at Woodstock in 1681. These, not printed till 1761,* are certainly far from important; yet they are entitled to rank as the starting-point in the process, scarcely even now brought to a conclusion, of textual collation and recension; and the strangest part of the matter seems to be, that such a labour should have had such a pioneer. We probably owe this lean critical exercitation to a cursory study of the Plays of the earlier poet in connection with his own dramatic efforts.

The process of recovery and rehabilitation in this matter has been singularly gradual, and a few new points have sufficed to confer on the finder a kind of celebrity. The effect of many of the fortuitous accessions to Shakespearian biography has been to shew, on the one hand, how incomplete our material yet remains, and on the other, how close to the surface more or less important evidences have lain during ages. Our earlier commentators or editors would have been immeasurably surprized to learn that in the *Journal* of the commander of an East-Indiaman, 1607, it is set down that for the sake of affording the crews of two vessels, sailing in company, wholesome recreation, the plays of *Hamlet*

* In the singularly uncommon edition of the Works, 8°, 1761. The copy, which I used, has been sent across the water to Mr. Furness, who had been unable to obtain one for his *Variorum*.

and *Richard II.* were performed on board.* Such unlooked-for information, of which the amount has insensibly accumulated till it more than equals the extent of the original biographical *data*, obliges us all to feel that we are in a transitional state of knowledge, and that no one can guess what is to be the next surprize.

* Rye, *England as Seen by Foreigners*, 1865, p. cxi.

CHAPTER VI.

More favourable conditions for dramatic writers about 1587. Two independent schools of theatrical management. Henslowe and Alleyn. The Burbages, Tarlton, and Shakespear. Thomas Coryat on the English and Continental stages about 1610. Opinion of John Florio on the English drama of his day. Gosson and other contemporary critics. Some particulars about the Elizabethan theatres, internal arrangement, and prices of seats. Dramatic exhibitions in inn yards. Sixpenny rooms at the theatre and their occupants. Elizabethan play-bills altogether different from ours. Methods of advertizing new pieces. Contrast between the old and the modern presentation of plays. Early theatrical headquarters. Suburban districts favoured by managers and actors. Particular interest of Fulham, Parson's Green, and other localities on the western side of the metropolis. John Florio. Holofernes..

THE times had grown more propitious to the dramatist and actor about the middle of the long reign of Elizabeth; toleration of theatrical spectacles had the customary and natural effect of producing those more or less capable of their preparation and presentment; and the liking and favour of the Queen toward this species of amusement and instruction soon spread to the younger or gayer members of the Court. Such a revolution in sentiment had an almost necessary tendency to elevate the status of the higher class of performers, who soon associated on amicable terms with many of the nobility and gentry; and after the Stuart succession, so far from James I. bringing into fashion the bigotry of Scottish life and thought, the passion of the aristocracy for play-going sensibly increased. The followers of the profession might still be rogues and vagabonds by a statutory fiction, but the licensed companies numbered among them persons of respectable origin and unimpeachable repute. Such were Shakespear, the Burbages, Alleyn; such was Lawrence Fletcher, the son of a bishop; and such indeed were all the Fletchers, Dr. Giles Fletcher

having written that remarkable dramatic poem on Richard III., which preceded the Shakespearian play in the order of its appearance. Such, once more, were Nathaniel Field, alike actor and author,* and Augustine Phillips, of whom the latter left under his will in 1605 a thirty-shilling piece in gold to his fellow Shakespear—almost the sole memorial of the kind.

The standing of Shakespear himself when he had occupied some years in London as a dramatic recensor, and had given to the world two original lyrical productions, mentioned soon after their issue in 1593-4 by Clarke in his *Polimanteia*, 1595, and by Meres in his *Wit's Treasury*, 1598, with approval, might, under existing conditions, have entitled him to accept or cultivate the acquaintance of any member of that fashionable and brilliant circle, to which the playhouse was as much a part of daily life as the Court and the drawing-rooms.

Another and independent voucher for the social elevation and acceptability of the playwright and actor—not unfrequently, as we know, a dual function united in the same individual—is the very remarkable fact, that a considerable proportion of the theatrical performers mentioned in the first folio edition of Shakespear, 1623, occur as communicants in the books of St. Mary Overy's, Southwark, a church within easy reach of the Globe and other theatres, and readily accessible to our poet himself during his residence in the Borough, if he thought proper to take part in such observances. From the general tenor of his writings I should judge that, if he did so, it was as a matter of policy and form rather than of conscientious persuasion. This point does not invalidate the significant fact that the conventional estimate of the stage in the Shakespearian era had sensibly risen, and that the more distinguished followers of the profession at least were desirous of being recognized as reputable members of society.

* His brother Theophilus was nominated in 1609, on the special recommendation of the King, to the living of St. Peter's, Cornhill, and became Bishop of Hereford.

Two types or schools seem to offer themselves to our notice in the theatrical annals of the Shakespear era: Henslowe and Alleyn, and the needy clients whom Henslowe at all events ungenerously remunerated; and, on the other side, the two Burbages, father and son, Tarlton, and, above all, the man of genius and of business, Shakespear who, as soon as his powers were known and felt, lost no time in emancipating himself from any undignified dependence on others, and learned to make the stage a source of more than bare subsistence. The two Burbages and Tarlton were persons already holding an excellent position, when Shakespear originally settled in the metropolis, and all three were professionally connected, and during many years neighbours in Shoreditch.

Alleyn and Henslowe, related by marriage, and equally men of practical character, did not confine their attention to purely theatrical speculations. They engaged with success in bear-baiting and similar spectacles, amusements which we decry as barbarous and degrading, even while we pursue others not less so at this very moment. Alleyn himself, a man of benevolent disposition, once baited a lion at the Tower, and Shakespear must have now and then looked on, when the bills had announced an entertainment at the Bear-garden. He makes Master Slender say that the sight was meat and drink to him; possibly it was so to the man who set down the saying, and who, unless he has been belied, could enjoy all good things. The poet specifically alludes to the famous bear Sackerson in the *Merry Wives*.

Theatrical management at the outset was not improbably viewed as a more or less precarious speculation, only fit for persons of collateral resources; and so we find that as Burbage the elder had his hostelry, Henslowe could depend on his business as a dyer. The father of Alleyn kept the Pye near Bishopsgate; but the founder of Dulwich College does not seem to have followed the calling. Nor was this plurality limited to managers, for Tarlton, prince of the old school of low comedians, was concurrently the

keeper of a tavern, and evidently made one vocation play into the other.

The ancients conducted their theatrical arrangements under different conditions from ours, so far as we are enabled to inform ourselves; but the supply of refreshments was even more a feature in the business than among us either formerly or now. How, again, the commissariat was ordered, we do not hear; but in England it is so much the case, that the *buffet*, as we term it, has always been a prominent part of the undertaking, that the Elizabethan theatre may almost be said to have been an evolution from the tavern or hostelry, as we at present observe in such institutions as the Gaiety, the Criterion, and the Pavilion. The fellowship between the playhouse and the bar was of very early growth and uninterrupted in its continuance, and a favouring cause was perhaps the incessant multitude of strangers, who had no fixed or regular domiciles in London, and of whom the foreign section was habituated to restaurants. In fact in such universally accessible books as Pepys's and Evelyn's *Diaries*, one perceives, how usual it was to dispense hospitality in this way instead of receiving visitors at home; and to-day the Londoner still gives his friends a dinner at the hotel, as a prelude to a visit with them to the playhouse under the same roof and management.

The writers of the day appear to suggest that fruit was sold in the Stuart, if not Elizabethan, theatre, and in one place we collect that a method of denoting displeasure at a performer was to throw a pippin at him, a practical kind of criticism limited, no doubt, to the gallery and pit.

Gosson, in his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, printed about 1581, exhibits the peculiar animosity of a renegade against his original occupation and study. He evidently intends to attack the class of subject and plot, which the immediate predecessors of Shakespear had introduced, and which the Stratford poet carried to such perfection and refinement, where he says: "When the soul of your plays is either mere trifles, or Italian bawdry, or

wooing of gentlewomen, what are we taught?"* Sir William Cornwallis,† more particularly speaking of Paris Gardue, writes: "There is another sort worse than these, that never utter any thing of their own, but get Jests by heart, and rob books and men of pretty tales, and yet hope for this to have a place above the salt." Puttenham, however, in his *Arte of English Poesie*, written some years before it was published in 1589, already alludes to the adoption at the theatres of learned or foreign phrases, "fetched from the inkhorn or borrowed of strangers," which implies a resort to continental models; but he also leads us to understand that the less educated part of the audience paid greater attention to the show than to the dialogue.

In the tract entitled *Martin's Month's Mind*, by John Penri and Job Throckmorton, 1589, the writers tell us that the price of admission to the theatre was a penny, that is to say, a silver penny of Elizabeth, worth about sixpence of our reckoning. But Lambarde, in his *Perambulation of Kent*, written in 1570, lets us into the secret that it cost three pence to get a good place, namely, a penny at the gate, a penny at "the entry of the Scaffold," and a penny for "a quiet standing"—about eighteen pence altogether of our money. In the *Raven's Almanac* by T. Decker, 1609, there is a mention of the two-penny galleries, in "the most perspicuous place of which you shall clearly, and with an ape's eye, behold all the parts."

Going a little farther back, in a jest-book of 1567,‡ a penny or even a halfpenny is said to be accepted *at the gate*, two men standing there with a box, "as the fashion is," to take the money; but in this case the performance was nothing more than an impudent trick.

Some interesting and prizable particulars of contemporary performances of Shakespear's plays are already before the general

* *English Drama and Stage*, 1869, p. 181.

† *Essayes by Sir William Cornwallis the yonger*, 1606, sign. H 3.

‡ *Tales and Quicke Answers*, 1567, No. 133.

reader. They are derived from the Diaries of John Manningham and Dr. Forman, and from the scantiness of such information are not well to be over-valued. But the mention in a printed book of 1598* of the visit of Robert Tofte, whom I have signalized below as a traveller and a probable acquaintance of the poet, to the exhibition of *Love's Labor's Lost*, then a new play, in company with his mistress, Euphemia Carill, of Warrington, has a bearing of its own, although the writer—Tofte himself—tantalizes us in a not unusual way by keeping strict silence as to what he thought of the piece and the author, and as to the nature of the cast. All that he deemed it necessary to say was that the title and texture of the drama caused him pain, and that he stayed in the house reluctantly in attendance on the lady. So it is in almost every instance. Tofte by no means stood alone in failing to foresee that posterity would have been in an immeasurably greater degree his debtor had he at any rate supplemented the expression of his transient personal sentiments with a ray or so of light on the scene under his eyes. Yet is it a suggestive glimpse, and of its kind unique.

In the *English Drama and Stage*, 1869, it was the object of the present writer to draw as far as possible into one focus all the available documents and treatises connected with the theatres under the Tudors and Stuarts; but the scheme remained incomplete. In the printed volume, however, will be found a large assortment of facts and references, illustrating Shakespear from this point of view, and assisting us to realize the condition and aspect of the London playhouses in or about his time. Running through the contents, there are entries of obvious pertinence almost innumerable: how ladies mistook the actors for the persons whom they represented; what comparison the singers of ballads in the streets bore to the singers on the stage; the contrast of the entertainment at the Bear Garden with that at the play-

* *Alba. The Months Minde of a Melancholy Lover*, 12°, 1598.

houses; allusions to the two Bull* inns in Gracechurch and Bishopsgate streets, and the Cross-Keys, in whose yards dramatic performances were held; the early and inveterate fondness of Londoners for plays and interludes; the strewing of the stage with rushes; the dressers or tiremen at theatres; and the high price charged for tobacco there by the "tobacco-men," who asked for just as much as would fill a penny pipe what was not twelve-pence a horse-load. These are merely indications; and for the rest I must send the reader to the volume itself.

The dearth of personal testimony to the state of the theatres of London in former times may make it warrantable to quote a passage from a volume of Travels in England,† written by a Frenchman (H. M. de V.), and published in 1698, when many of the old-time traditions were still preserved. The author is not so explicit as might have been desired; but he states certain facts, which came under his notice. "There are two theatres in London," he says, in a marginal note; adding, that a third has just been opened, "one large and fine, where they sometimes perform Operas, sometimes Comedies; the other smaller, which is only for Comedy. The parterre is in the form of an amphitheatre and supplied with benches without backs, covered with green cloth. The men of quality, especially the young ones, some respectable ladies, and many young girls seeking their fortune, sit there pell-mell, talk, play, chaff, listen to what others are saying, or not. Farther, against the wall, under the first gallery, rises another amphitheatre, which is occupied by persons of the highest quality, among whom one observes very few men. The galleries, of which there is only a double row, are filled by the common sort of people, and more so the upper one."

* Has this connection between the inns so called and theatrical exhibitions any bearing on the notice in a Stuart broadside cited by me (*English Drama and Stage*, ix.), that players are under the sign Taurus?

† *Memoires et Observations Faites par un Voyageur en Angleterre*; A la Haye, 1698, 8°.

At the commencement of the Civil War, and just before the suppression of the theatres, the author of the *Stage-Player's Complaint*, 1641, specifies sixpenny rooms, occupied by women of bad character in the hope of attracting prentices or lawyers' clerks, and threepenny galleries; so that prices seem to have risen in greater proportion than the probably lower value of money.

But in 1677 the charge for seats in the boxes on first nights had risen to five shillings—a really extravagant figure, when we consider that the sum represented thirty shillings or upward of modern currency. The taste for theatricals had since 1641, however, experienced a great revival.

Playbills, as we understand the term, were unknown in, and indeed long after, the days of our poet. What are described in more than one place as bills of the play were advertisements attached to walls or other conspicuous places, announcing a forthcoming performance. In *Merry Tales and Quick Answers*, 1567, No. 133, we have a story “how a merry man devised to call people to a play,” and the account opens thus: “A merry man, called Qualities, on a time set up bills upon posts about London, that whosoever would come to Northumberland Place, should hear such an antic play, that, both for the matter and handling, the like was never heard before. For all they that should play therein were gentlemen.” The narrative proceeds to say that a great crowd was attracted, and that the whole affair was a hoax. The point is, that we here see, what the play-bill was; and the same sort of deception, practised by a Lincoln's Inn man in 1602,* shews, if it were necessary, a similar use of the expression. In 1587, a privilege was accorded to John Charlwood for the “onelye ymprintinge of all maner of Billes for players”; and this right appears to have been subsequently exercised by James Roberts, whose place of business in Barbican had been previously that of Charlwood, and was convenient for the East End theatres.

* Collier's *Bibliographical Catalogue*, 1865, i. xliv., quoting a letter of John Chamberlain, 19 Nov., 1602.

The practice of "setting up bills," preparatorily to the exhibition of a play, was equally usual in Germany, and Cohn furnishes a highly curious document* of this class, seeming to point to a preference for short pieces and a call for light, amusing, and even ludicrous, matter; and a broadside of a precisely analogous description has descended to us, shewing that in 1541 the *Mystere des Actes des Apostres* was announced as about to be exhibited in Paris by cry and proclamation.†

A second mode of notifying forthcoming novelties was an intimation of the project through the Epilogue or chorus at the end of a play, as in the *Second Part of Henry IV.*, where we have:—"if you be not too much cloyd with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katherine of France;" *Henry V.* concludes with the lines beginning:—

"Thus far with rough and all unable pen
Our bending author hath pursued the story—"

And the Chorus farther alludes to the plays on Henry VI., "which oft our stage hath shown." But there is no promise of new pieces on that reign from Shakespear's hand as author or editor. The Epilogue and Chorus, from which the foregoing extracts are given, are not in the foundation-plays.

A word may be here said of the expressions *humble* and *bending author*, as they seem to be very early examples of such propitiatory phraseology; and the second form indicates that the lines were delivered in a kneeling posture.

Thomas Coryat, who had opportunities of comparing the English and Venetian stages in the days of the poet, gives in his volume of Travels, published in 1611, the superiority to his own country. Speaking of Venice, he observes: "The play-house is very beggarly and base in comparison of our stately playhouses in

* *Shakespeare in Germany*, 1865, facsimiles at end.

† *Le Cry et Proclamation Publicque pour iouer la Mistere des Actes des Apostres en la Ville de Paris*, 1541. Reprinted in facsimile, 8vo, 1830.

England, neither can their actors compare with us for apparel, shows and music." On the other hand, John Florio speaks very disrespectfully even of the historical type of drama, which we usually credit the poet with having brought to such a height of perfection, and suggests that it was inferior to the Italian mode; and certainly a Venetian spectator—nay, Florio himself—at the performance of the *Merchant of Venice* or *Othello* in London might have well wondered, whence the author obtained his ideas, even while, in the case of the Moor, he might have appreciated the passion, and have forgiven the violence. Nor would the *Blurt*, *Master Constable* of Middleton, 1602, or the *Venice Preserved* of Otway, 1682, have been regarded as truer to historical facts and local colouring by an Italian spectator.

Florio, who may be assumed to have also witnessed the original presentation of *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, doubtless included them in the same censure. All four dramas were of Italian origin. Any improprieties in *Hamlet* and such other pieces, as purported to reproduce historical events, the immediate critic would be less likely, as he was less competent, to detect; he confines himself to the inaccurate manner, in which Shakespear and the actors who interpreted his text, rendered the subject, so far as his local knowledge enabled him to judge.

The luxurious and realistic presentation of the plays of Shakespear on the modern stage has been a process of slow growth, and is a response to the call of a more highly educated auditory for mechanical and decorative accessories more in keeping with the immediate subject-matter. The author, it is quite unnecessary to remark, never saw his labours illustrated and seconded by such an imposing costume, nor did he probably dream of the possibility of generations of Englishmen arising to honour the products of his master-pen with all the auxiliary resources of study, skill, and cost. Throwing ourselves back in thought to the original performances, as they were successively exhibited on the boards in town and country, it argues much alike for the author and the

spectators, that in spite of all the disadvantages attendant on want of scenery and other appliances this series of plays was so successful, and brought Shakespear and his partners substantial profits. For, on the whole, they were spectacles destitute of the adventitious attraction of strong and coarse melodramatic incident, and appealed by their historical instruction, their delicate sentiment, and their refined humour to crowded houses, embracing all ranks of people, who must have gradually learned to distinguish between such pieces and those of the older school. Rude and inadequate as the scenic arrangements long remained, thousands were sent home better and wiser, and thousands, before the great Duke of Marlborough was born, learned all their history at the Curtain, the Blackfriars, and the Globe.

The anecdotes, which we have inherited, of the approach of Shakespear to the Court in connection with the performance of his own pieces or even those of others belonging to his theatre, have, if we desire to estimate them at their true value, to be read with a recollection, that all theatrical spectacles exhibited before our earlier sovereigns took place, not at the ordinary playhouses, but at the private one, long known as the Cockpit, in Whitehall. This consideration modifies, and assists in explaining, the story of Elizabeth honouring the dramatist-actor with a particular notice on one occasion; and a similar criticism may be said to apply to the theatricals at Oxford in 1605, celebrating the visit of James I. to that city and university. Incidents of this class, described without an allusion to the surrounding circumstances, are liable to misconstruction.

Anyone tolerably conversant with the drama of the period will probably assent to the comparative freedom of the Shakespearian series from grossness. How far this valuable result is attributable to natural inclination, and how far to politic restraint, it is imprudent to assert; but the opportunities, which the poet enjoyed, of gauging the public temper, while he served his apprenticeship to the profession as a corrector and performer, possibly

influenced him in excluding from his texts passages and expressions likely to militate against the general acceptability of his pieces, when he commenced on his own independent account as a writer, and to make them less appropriate for representation at Court or in what was known as a private house.

The original theatrical headquarters, when Shakespear entered on his career as a dramatist, were Shoreditch, Blackfriars, and the Borough. In those districts, which at present exhibit few and faint traces of their former condition and importance, many of the most distinguished and popular members of the profession lived and died; among the rest Edmund Shakespear the actor, brother of the poet, is noted as interred at Southwark with special marks of respect in 1607. Shoreditch and Southwark alike were in those days by no means unpleasant places of abode; they were still fairly open, and beyond lay the unbroken view of the country; and it was here and hereabout that Shakespear spent much of his time in labour so fruitful for him and more so, perchance, for us, or among the friends, the Burbages, Tarlton, and others, whom he met on his first visit to the great city.

Far beyond the precincts of the theatres and the bills of mortality a practice had arisen in the Elizabethan time of resorting temporarily or otherwise to some of the western suburbs; and one of the motives for this new departure was the periodical recurrence of the plague, as the population increased, and no adequate sanitary precautions existed. An usage, at first provisional, gradually developed into the hire of country lodgings or even houses, and the villages round London furnished occasional residences for a large number of literary and theatrical celebrities belonging to the set, which Shakespear actually knew, or to their immediate successors under the earlier Stuarts. There certainly appears to have been a predilection for this side of the metropolis in former times, as there has been in our own, even where original residents in the city itself might have been supposed to find places of agreeable retirement in other directions.

From the Elizabethan period onward literary men, actors, managers are found choosing by preference these western and southern suburbs of London as temporary or permanent places of abode. We are able to trace them at Dulwich, Fulham, North-End, Walham Green, Parson's Green, and Mortlake, and whereas it is unhappily the case, that during his protracted and continuous stay in the capital the private movements of Shakespear are enveloped in almost impenetrable mystery, we are left to surmise, how far he was in the habit of finding his way hither at intervals of leisure or on emergencies. As we con over the list of names, which occur as those of residents or lodgers in these delightful retreats in the old days, we are almost precluded from refusing to believe, that the ground within these limits was often pressed by the feet of Shakespear—pressed too, when he was at the height of his reputation as a man of genius and substance. Some of the men, whom he so well knew, settled in those parts at a later date; others remained only for a season, having quitted the town to avoid the ravages of the plague at successive intervals; and the latter contingency brings to the front in a rather new light an episode connected with the earlier career of the poet to be hereafter noticed. There was Robert Burbage at North End, where, moreover, master William Plumbe, Esquire, must have received his nephew Joshua Sylvester: John Florio and Henry Condell at Fulham: Sir Thomas Bodley at Parson's Green (from 1605 to 1613, when he died there): John Norden the topographer, at Walham Green (in 1596), and at Mortlake, Augustine Phillips, Shakespear's fellow-actor. Fulham from 1594 to 1596 offered the additional interest of having at the Palace Dr. Richard Fletcher, father of the better-recollected playwright and member of a family remarkable for culture. Certain among these arrived at a point of time too advanced to allow us to associate them with any circle, in which Shakespear might have mixed as an occasional visitor; but the particulars vouchsafed to us by accident are necessarily imperfect, and here we are clearly at any rate on classic ground.

Besides its cottages and lodgings adapted to the wants of residents, Fulham had its inns, of which the Golden Lion was the most famous and splendid; but in the days of the poet this was probably a private mansion, which was subsequently converted to another purpose, as Holcrofts, within living memory a private house, had been, on the contrary, a place of public entertainment—not impossibly the leading one in the village. Of those persons of note, who once inhabited the place, both Florio and Condell were later comers, neither seeming to have retired hither before 1619, when Shakespear had been long dead. Yet the great dramatist undoubtedly knew both at an anterior period—Florio, when he lived in Shoe Lane or in St. Clement's Danes. We are not entitled to suppose that we enjoy much converse with the personal relations between Shakespear and Florio; but the latter was a man likely to have been drawn into service by the poet, where Italian customs and phraseology entered into the business of a piece before him. He is thought to have caricatured the lexicographer and teacher in Holofernes; the lexicographer and teacher certainly included some of Shakespear's performances in his general censure of English plays as "perverted histories without decorum;" if Holofernes sat for Florio, we can be at no loss to guess which, the Italian or the Englishman, dealt the more telling stroke. So far as the name goes, it is found as a *dramatis persona* and the title of a play, before Shakespear was born.*

* *Manual of Old English Plays*, 1892, v. *Holofernes*.

CHAPTER VII.

Principle of dramatic adaptation of great antiquity. Abundance of MSS. submitted to the theatres by outsiders as well as professional dramatists. Pieces which may have come in this way to Burbage's Theatre, while Shakespear was serving him as an Editor. Arden of Faversham, Warning for Fair Women, Mucedorus, &c. A Shakespearian Apocrypha. Absence of a law of copyright. Shakespear predisposed to treat all available material as his own property. Sciography. Robert Greene and his friends—their attacks on Shakespear. Greene's own sins. Shakespear between 1587 and 1592. His earlier work solely adapted material. His method. His rapidity or quickness of study. Vast difference between the first sketch and the perfected work. Great advantage of elaboration of outlines. His probably inconsiderable obligations to book-learning. Publications within his reach, to which he may have resorted in unequal measure. Rarity of the early quartos incidentally explained. First known collector of them.

THE process of adapting dramatic compositions is probably almost as ancient as the drama itself. The presentment of a piece on the stage even in the most primitive times was apt to reveal defects, which were supplied by the writer himself, his friends, or his successors. Of about an hundred and thirty plays ascribed to Plautus, for instance, it is stated by Aulus Gellius that only about a fifth was actually from his pen, the remainder being works by anterior playwrights, and revised by him to render them suitable for an improved, or at all events altered, taste. This reference is worth notice, because to some extent it displays a perfect analogy with the state of the theatre, when our Shakespear first undertook to castigate and embellish certain manuscript efforts of others, some already introduced on the boards, others deemed impracticable without previous recension, before he commenced his own independent career as a dramatic creator.

Of this kind of material it may be securely judged from extant evidences, that there was never a failure. It came from all

sorts of persons, who thought that they possessed the dramatic gift, and of course much has totally disappeared. I should like to be able to persuade myself that in one instance Shakespear, or at all events the theatre, to which he was attached, was approached, directly or otherwise, by a second comparatively young man, who had written plays, and desired to see them performed, but not to disclose his identity.

Having fixed himself in the metropolis about 1587, there is no substantial ground for the hypothesis that he quitted the scene of his first entrance on life and apprenticeship to the drama during several years; and the theory, that he accompanied the players, who visited Stratford in the year just named, appears to be unsustained either by evidence or likelihood. He was only four-and-twenty, and had the task before him of shewing his quality, before he could emerge, even with the help of well-wishers, from the most subordinate rank among the staff at the playhouse, to which he first attached himself.

There are several plays of the melodramatic class, such as *Arden of Faversham*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, and others, which have been thought by the earlier critics to be Shakespear's, because his style was visible, perhaps, here and there; and there is before us a choice of two solutions of this literary puzzle. Either an inferior writer more or less successfully imitated in a passage or so the manner of his contemporary, or the poet himself was commissioned in the earlier portion of his career to read manuscripts, and insert or revise sentences and portions of scenes at his discretion. The comedy of *Mucedorus*, 1598, has been sometimes held to contain a passage interpolated by Shakespear; but this is very doubtful. The piece was perhaps from the pen of Heywood, and, if so, it would be his earliest known printed production. A play, which betrays far stronger marks of an editorial hand—that hand Shakespear's—is the *Reign of Edward the Third*, published in 1596; and a line in Sonnet 94 is incorporated *verbatim* with it. His treatment of such a subject would be strictly in a line with

his English historical series, just as *Titus Andronicus*, so far as he is actually responsible for it (Ravenscroft in 1678 had heard that he only retouched it), may have led the way to the Roman Plays *longo intervallo*. Many of the so-called *Doubtful Plays* are misnamed, so far as their Shakespearian parentage goes; they constitute rather an Apocrypha, while, on the contrary, in reading some of the strictly anonymous pieces produced and printed down even to 1600 we can never be sure, that the eye and hand of a master have not been there; and in a drama, for instance, such as *Look about You*, performed by the Lord Admiral's servants before the year just named, there are vestiges of superior manipulation and in the Earl of Gloucester, a *dramatis persona*, we observe a hint for the cynical and deranged types of character worked out more fully and ably in *Timon* and *Lear*.

In another way the presence of the poet behind the scenes, in the earlier stages of his career at least, must be allowed to have afforded him an excellent opportunity of hearing what manuscripts were in course of submission or under consideration at the leading theatres; and there is nothing improbable in an old note on the title-page of the play of *George A' Green, the Pinder of Wakefield*, 1599 (but written some years prior), to the effect that it was the work of a minister or clergyman, who took the part of the Pinder himself, "*teste* W. Shakespeare"—that is to say, I conclude, that the author of the memorandum had been so informed by no less a person than the poet. But it is added just below: "Ed. Juby saith that this play was made by Ro. Green." Juby was part-writer of a drama on the subject of Samson, performed in 1602. The two statements are not irreconcilable, as Greene may have altered a production originally composed by another pen, nor was he too scrupulous to have appropriated the labour of the minister without acknowledgment.

In the time of Shakespear the absence of any system of copyright outside the rather uncertain official machinery under the control of the Lord Chamberlain, and the want of general

publicity, when no press existed, combined to favour a general habit of plagiarism, especially as regarded the use in productions intended for the stage of passages from those intended for the closet and *vice versâ*. Borrowers were, broadly speaking, of two orders: those who borrowed and bettered, and those who borrowed, and marred in the appropriation. Nothing more serious than reproof in print attended these operations; and there was a case or so, where even a portrait of one literary gentleman was made to do service for another, who desired to spare himself the trouble and expense of sitting for his own likeness. Our poet certainly, as has been copiously demonstrated, was a prominent disciple of this school, and he can scarcely be said to have drawn any line. For from the dramas of others and from their lyrics he drew whatever struck his fancy as apt to dovetail happily into some scene, passage or sentence in his own; he was of the conveyancers, who did not disimprove what he so honoured; and, the quarry secured, the remainder dropped from his hand, as the mouse's skin does on the grass from the owl in the bough overhead. It was *feuille morte*. His immediate predecessors and contemporaries unconsciously prepared material in book-form or otherwise for one, who almost exclusively read with a single object—the transmutation of what they had written into what he thought that they should, had they been of his turn of mind.

His readiness to shew toward his predecessors, wherever he deemed it worth while “the sincerest flattery,” might be illustrated almost to any extent. He did not scruple to transfer to his own page even the very expression with which he met in the productions of others; and this criticism does not contemplate his scientific revision of older plays so much as his casual loan of details, perhaps in an undramatic work, which fell in his way. I shall give a rather remarkable example of his obligation to a source, at present known only in a fragmentary shape, for the cue of a passage in *Hamlet*. In act 2, scene 2, there is the place, where the Prince expatiates on dreams:—

"*Ham.* O God! I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a King of infinite space, were it not that I have had dreams.

Guil. Which dreams indeed are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

Ham. A dream itself is but a shadow."

More than half a century ago a contributor to the *Shakespeare Society's Papers*, Mr. H. G. Norton, of Liverpool, reprinted from a fragment of five leaves in his possession "The Waking Man's Dream," conjectured by him to be a portion of a reprint of the Storybook by Richard Edwards described by Warton the historian as having been seen by him at Chichester in the hands of Collins the poet. This relic commences with what is called *The Fifth Event* in these terms: "The Greeke proverbe saith, that a man is but the dreame of a shaddow, or the shaddow of a dreame"—and so the writer proceeds. But my sole object was to exhibit the precise adoption of the phrase and notion in the cited sentence from the book by the playwright, the common original purporting to be Greek. There is no positive evidence that the fragment belongs to the work by Edwards, except that both contain the plot of the induction of the *Taming of a Shrew*; and the Collins book is not at present forthcoming. This sciographical form of conceit was taken up by Daniel in those lines:—

"Are they shadows that we see,
And can shadows pleasure give?
Pleasures only shadows be,
Cast by bodies we conceive—"

The present feature in the poet's literary history has not failed to receive attention from others; and I therefore forbear to pursue it beyond dwelling for a moment on the rather important part which this phase of life and thought plays in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and its convenience for dramatic purposes. It dates back to the Hebrew Scriptures and possibly farther.

Robert Greene, who was the foremost member of a small literary clique, which attacked Shakespeare, and who represented

the latter as "beautified with their feathers," did not hesitate to press into his service a tract by Francis Thynne, when he was in search of a topic for a fresh pot-boiler; and his *Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, 1592, where he so violently assails the Harveys, is little more than a *rechauffé* of the *Debate between Pride and Lowliness*, printed by Thynne about two decades before, and (as Greene calculated) forgotten. Then it became the turn of Greene to suffer the wrong, which he had so freely inflicted on others; and in 1615 his *Disputation between a He-Conycatcher and a She-Conycatcher*, 1592, was served up by some one else as a new cate of his own under the title of *Thieves Falling Out, True Men come by their Goods*. Even in the theatrical department, Greene had not invariably succeeded in maintaining an immaculate repute; he was constantly in great straits; and he was upbraided by a contemporary for having raised funds in one instance by selling his *Orlando Furioso* twice over. At any rate, he was tolerably vulnerable, if Shakespear had cared to recriminate, which we may rest satisfied that he did not publicly do, much less in print.

The poet had, no doubt, a rather heavy cross to bear from the moment, when he discovered the possession of such high gifts, until he had rendered his position secure, and had established a new era. Not only were the professional jealousy and disparagement to be overcome; but until the greater portion of the reign of Elizabeth had run out, the state of public opinion was adverse to the stage. If the advent of the Stuarts was productive of no other benefit, it arrested the puritanical movement, and yielded infinitely larger scope to the theatrical profession.

In 1592, when Greene denounced him as a poacher on the domain, which he seems to have viewed as the freehold of his immediate set and himself, Shakespear had inferribly raised his reputation as an editor and adapter to a sufficient height to render him an object of jealousy and dislike. We are surely to allow

the lapse of half-a-dozen years for such a measure of success on the part of one, who had exchanged his provincial for a London home, with a view to a livelihood, if not something more, a comparative novice, though not, as I think, a friendless stranger. Of his performances as a corrector of other men's manuscripts in the interval we seem to feel that we know something ; but I am convinced that we are far from knowing all about his employment between 1587 and 1592 apart from his original lyrical work, some to be shortly before the public, some not yet to see the light—never to see it for all he cared. A man of his pliant intellect and masterful grasp—a quinquennial term, where a *nucleus* or a skeleton of some sort was forthcoming, was nearly incapable of expiring, before “Johannes Factotum,” as the angry Greene christens him, had a notable record to shew. One of the most interesting problems, with which the present small undertaking deals, is immediately connected with this epoch and this phase of the poet's career.

Nearly all Shakespear's more important productions, it is notable, are developments of other Authors' labours. His brain was an alchemical laboratory, from which poor material emerged so transmuted, that the original writer might have scarcely recognized his offspring, if he had been yet living, and might at the same time have entertained that dislike of his finisher or rather transformer, of which we hear from Greene. But the advantage, which Shakespear derived from the employment of the performances of his predecessors, however crude, was very great—even greater than has been generally allowed. To have the essay of another in type or even in writing before one tends to confer on the first text of a revised work the benefit and attributes of a second issue. One detects and amends the faults of some one else instead of one's own. The possession of a sketch by a writer of so receptive a mind was analogous to that of one by a painter, who outlines roughly on paper what he subsequently elaborates on canvas.

The dramatist found himself mainly befriended by two distinct classes of germ or prototype, the actual drama and the story awaiting dramatization. To the former category his earlier labours were exclusively confined; it was easier to deal with a ready-made piece, than to transform a narrative written for the closet into one suitable for the stage. Much more of other playwrights' work than we are ever likely to know enjoyed the advantage of his castigation; but in the later and maturer period the rough copy, whether reduced to theatrical shape or not, whether such a production as the old *Hamlet* or as Greene's *Pandosto*, emerged from the crucible refined and glorified beyond identification.

The method of Shakespear seems to have been to procure or adopt a groundwork in print or manuscript, to accumulate suggestions from conversation or hearsay, and to rely for the rest on his own vast and fertile fancy. His aggregate indebtedness to the entire corpus of raw material assembled together in *Shakespear's Library* was assuredly very insignificant. Yet some of these supposed originals were his sole resource, so far as book-learning went. I apprehend that the poet resorted to manuscripts sparingly, unless they were acting copies of other men's plays, shown to him, or submitted for his revision. It was of course no original practice, but one, which the Roman dramatists had freely followed, both as regarded the employment of existing material and its reproduction as their own work.*

The reputed solecisms of the dramatist in historical, geographical, and other directions, to whatever they may amount, are largely susceptible of being explained by the nature of his leading aims, which were truth to nature and accuracy of delineation. He had ever before his eyes the sovereign need of fulfilling theatrical requirements and impressing the popular fancy; and these objects he assuredly attained, when through a succession of years in so consummate a degree he appealed to every phase of human sensi-

* Beloe's *Aulus Gellius*, i., 190.

bility—to our everlasting sense of humour, of beauty, of terror, of pathos.

With his subtle and happy intuition, on which rests, perhaps more than on anything else, his fame to-day, it stands differently; and it is conceivable that it was sparingly appreciated by contemporaries. Near the opening of the *Merchant of Venice* there is the passage:—

“*Salarino* . . . I should not see the sandy hour-glass run,
But I should think of shallows and of flats;
And see my wealthy *Andrew* dock'd in sand,
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs,
To kiss her burial. Should I go to church,
And see the holy edifice of stone,
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream;
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks—”

This sort of inner sense an Elizabethan audience might have scarcely caught; and such treatment is common. It is plain, that Shakespear had a kindness for this class of imagery, and we see with what a master's hand he drew it. This is the respect, in which Tennyson among the moderns most resembles him.

The surviving proportion of the manuscript dramas offered to the theatres during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods has been represented as so low as one in fifty. But these pieces were brought or sent in many cases by strangers and outsiders, and were first and perhaps only attempts in this class of composition; yet there is evidence that plays written by such experienced hands as Peele and Greene have been lost. Shakespear, however, was so far happily situated in the present respect, that his early acquisition of a vested interest in the theatre and company, with which he associated himself, secured him a control over his papers and copy; and there is little or no ground for the apprehension, that, whatever may be the case with mere slight *rifacimenti* of other men's work, any production with a distinct claim to his main authorship has failed to descend to us.

The loss of contributions or offerings to the theatres in London, however great it may have been, was probably insignificant in comparison with that, which we have sustained from the destruction of dramatic literature once extant in Greece and Rome, if any conclusion is to be drawn from the references and extracts in such works as the *Deipnosophistæ* of Athenæus and the *Bibliotheca* of Photius.

The curious diversity of more or less casual suggestions in the Plays and Poems assists in encouraging us to lean to the idea, that Shakespear was more prone to the appropriation of detached incidents and expressions, which he very probably in some cases husbanded against an opportunity for use, than to complete dependence on any given original; which goes some distance toward repeating, that the set of volumes known as *Shakespear's Library* is in fact a far less considerable creditor than it is generally reputed to have been. In fact, there were cases, where a simple phrase on a title-page was sufficient to develop a train of thought. Take the somewhat famous passage, where Gonzalo in the *Tempest* is the mouthpiece for a declaration of heterodox views on government. The main notion is from the Essay of Montaigne *On Cannibals*; but the English writer almost seems to have had before him a volume, now very rare, called *The Defence of Contraries*, translated from the French by a fellow-playright, Anthony Munday. Perhaps he did no more than carry away the terms of the title-page.

From his dependence on cues and hints, and on a quick study of salient features rather than on the exhaustive perusal or mastery of a volume, he may well have regarded with more tolerant eyes than ourselves much of the rather dull and poor literary material in the department of fiction, produced by the age just preceding his own and by his contemporaries; but I picture him to myself skipping a great deal, and mentally storing only those passages or points, which he judged to be dramatically manageable. His vision glanced from the printed book before him to the stage and

the theatrical company, on which the mere literary treatment was bound to wait. Passages, which might tell in the prose or even lyrical form, were frequently unadapted for the boards; and it amounts to this, that the poet held a conference with someone else through his published work, just as he would have done by word of mouth; he took from his text just as much as suited him, or as little, as he would have taken in the course of conversation.

The rather voluminous and imposing array of books of reference is of course not without its fanciful and forsooth its commercial element, as there is a powerful inducement to bring within the range of Shakespeariana items, which have otherwise slight pretensions to notice and value. It is a pity that the pecuniary motive should have tended to set back to so considerable an extent the limits of the reading and toll of the poet; and some of the authorities or sources quoted are purely ridiculous.* I apprehend that it is necessary to reject all the hypotheses as to his *direct* debt to foreign analogues beyond a collection of their general tenor from others and the possession by such means of sufficient suggestion for his purpose; but, on the contrary, one conceives him likely to have welcomed and attentively studied such comprehensive miscellanies as the *Mirror for Magistrates*, the *Palace of Pleasure*, Fenton's *Tragical Discourses*, and Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*; but Holinshed's Chronicle, Fox's Martyrs, North's Plutarch, and perhaps the English Froissart, were bulkier undertakings, which he could hardly afford to ignore or neglect: the Holinshed for the English historical series and the Plutarch for the Roman plays. There were many other publications of the day, which he laid under tribute for incidental expressions or images; for example, Golding's Ovid and the English version of the *World of Wonders* by Henri Etienne, to the latter of which Mr. Caldecott

* Recently Done's *Polydoron*, 1631, fetched a high price at a sale in London, because in an enumeration of family patronymics are instanced such names as *Shake-spear*!

attached no slight importance.* Two primers, the *Sententiæ Pueriles* and Lily's *Accidence* are cited as having fallen under his notice, and he expressly quotes the Mantuan Eclogues of Battista Spagnuoli, of which, however, there were English renderings from 1567 to 1594; but any way he merely dipped into the volume cursorily and places in the mouth of Holofernes a line from one of these pastorals, then so popular as to be read in schools. Keeping before our eyes the fact that the seminary at Stratford held a high rank among the educational institutions of its class, it is improper to deny to Shakespear, above all, the credit of being sufficiently conversant with these elementary manuals to select what suited him; and if we could be sure that the Aldine Ovid in the Bodleian really passed through his hands, and received the honour of his mark of ownership, we should much more easily believe that he was fully qualified to grasp the contents.

The unexpected usually occurs. At any moment, in some unexplored recess, an addition to our positive acquaintance with the bookish appurtenances of the poet may come to light. If we were to compute the importance of such a discovery by the obligation incurred, we should most cordially welcome a Holinshed or a Plutarch—more particularly, if, in addition to his autograph, it should possess marginalia or even underscorings.

Whether the debt of the poet to those romantic productions, such as Greene's *Pandosto* and Lodge's *Rosalynd*, was great or slender, their popular acceptance in the closet or study must have been immeasurably greater than that of his plays in book-form, many of which did not reach a second edition, while of the others there was no printed text in his lifetime. The public resorted to the theatre to witness their performance on the stage, for beyond

* See Hunter's *New Illustrations of Shakespear*, i., 322, for an account of the visit of this distinguished foreigner to London. He was of course only one of thousands, who came over here both prior to the Shakespearian era, and while the poet enjoyed opportunities of meeting or hearing of them. The name of Paul Hentzner is well known; but the Duc de Rohan was in England in 1600, and there is a printed account of his travels, 12^o, 1646.

the mere dialogue and plot there were all those adventitious accessories, which have always rendered the playhouse attractive to thousands, who do not read plays; and here lies, perhaps, the solution of the mystery surrounding the unquestionable rarity of the early quartos, which served for the immediate reference of those, who contemplated a visit to the place of representation, or desired to refresh their memories at home, rather than as literary productions deserving of shelf-room. The consequence is, that exceedingly few collections of the quartos were probably formed at or about the time; and the one hundred and twenty-two, contained in six volumes, which Henry Oxinden of Barham, near Canterbury, enumerates as being in his possession in 1647 (and they may very well have been at Barham long before), is an isolated record. The Oxindens are elsewhere specified as being among the Kentish gentry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who distinguished themselves by their taste for literature. This series of volumes, long since dispersed (it is to be more than feared), included Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, 1594, and Shakespear's *Hamlet*, 1603. The only other collector and holder of such literature known to me was Griffith Williams, Bishop of Ossory, a contemporary of Oxinden; he had certainly one extremely valuable volume of Elizabethan dramas, which occurred for sale at Manchester in 1881, in a library consigned from North Wales.

I laboriously copied out for the Huth Catalogue the entire list from the MS. Common-place book of Oxinden in that library; but the matter was suppressed (with a great deal more) by Mr. F. S. Ellis, to whom Mr. Huth unluckily confided the editorship. It is said that there is a similar series of volumes at Mostyn.

Perhaps of all these sources of inspiration that which comes nearest to the dramatic analogue in merit is the one (*Pericles*) where Shakespear had only a partial share in the composition—the *Pattern of Painful Adventures*, by Laurence Twyne, which is

even now far more readable than *Rosalind* or *Pandosto*, and is characterized by that modern tone, which distinguishes all literary work of the higher class.

In the writer's *Shakespeare's Library*, 1875, he has shown reason for ascribing to the dramatist in his Italian scenes a recourse to Thomas's *History of Italy*, 1549, Fenton's *Guicciardini*, 1579, and Harington's *Ariosto*, 1591, as well as to the *Palace of Pleasure* above named.

The volume of material, of which we have the nett matured essence in the Plays, falls under two distinct and almost independent categories: that, which the poet derived from more or less attentive perusal of books and pamphlets within his reach, and that which came to him by word of mouth from associates more familiar than himself with certain subjects and certain localities. The measure of obligation was as unequal as the source of it was various. In several instances, whatever estimate may be formed of such dramas anterior to his own on the same theme as have actually come down to us, the foundation-play was beyond question of immense service; for it supplied the general plot, and left to Shakespeare just that function, where he was supreme, the task of introducing happy and masterly touches, of modifying the *dramatis personæ*, and even of changing the consummation.

Shakespeare presented himself on the scene at an epoch when our national literature had been vastly enriched not merely by original compositions of a dramatic texture, but by an infinite diversity of works shedding a new light on foreign manners and ancient history; and among his personal friends in different degrees of intimacy were men, who had spent years in travel and adventure abroad, either on the Continent or in more remote regions, and from whose casual discourse innumerable hints were readily to be gleaned, even where the speakers had not committed their experiences to print. Then, once more, there were such within his cognizance as could make up for his own

shortcomings in languages, as could explain to him the purport of passages in foreign works not yet accessible in English, and correct sentences or phrases essential to a dialogue. When one looks at the reasonable possibilities, the resources of the writer outside his own observation and intuition were ample enough.

CHAPTER VIII.

Self-Culture. Value and influence of verbal communication. Rabelais. An ostensible source of error. Giulio Romano. Characters and incidents drawn from life. Falstaff and the buck-basket. Vindication of the poet from illiteracy and ignorance. The censure of Jonson. Superiority of Shakespear in a knowledge of his art. Curious slips in the Plays. Their prevailing character historical. Deliberate disregard of the Unities. The poet to be estimated in the aggregate.

THE opportunities of Shakespear for self-culture, subsequently to his attainment of manhood, regarding his peculiar aptitude for assimilation, have been unquestionably underrated, and the prevailing tendency has been to treat the Works as a prodigy emanating from an untaught genius. The world's greatest heroes and ornaments have been of such a cast, men of such beginnings, no heavier debtors to schools, seminaries and universities. Our national poet, in the first place, quitted home, as it is taken, in 1586-7, fairly grounded at Stratford school, richly stocked with all the knowledge of nature and human nature, which the country was capable of yielding, with a fair insight into legal details and terms, from the paternal necessity or humour for litigation and an intercourse with his cousin Greene, and an at least superficial acquaintance with theatrical matters derived from the companies, which periodically visited Stratford and neighbouring places within reach. His evident advantage from the friendship of the Burbages, of whom Richard was somewhere about his own age and in 1586 quite a beginner like himself, answers for his unusual rapidity in gaining a footing among the actors and those persons of quality or men of letters, who frequented the theatre in Shore-ditch; and the latter—the unprofessional section—were possessors by training or practical experience of the most widely varied

knowledge—able to impart to Shakespear the points of learning, in which he might be deficient, and which no one was better qualified to turn to account. These facilities formed an education more fruitful than book-lore and academical courses. Like Hobbes of Malmesbury, the poet set little by reading, but on different grounds. He preferred to go to the sources himself, whence the literature came; he studied humanity, as he had begun by studying nature, from life; and even the scholarly Jonson found it necessary to do the same thing in certain cases in order to eke out the shortcomings, if not to temper the gravity, of his classical creations.

The taste for continental and even more distant excursions had been created and fostered, just about the time when Shakespear began to seek material for his work, by the widely and rapidly diffused spirit of maritime adventure and discovery. We hear, independently of practical explorers like Raleigh, of such men as Thomas Lodge, Bartholomew Young, Lewes Lewkenor,* Robert Tofte, and Nicholas Breton, all more or less well-known names, acquiring in the Elizabethan period a familiarity with foreign travel, and visiting France, Spain, and Italy; and, on the other hand, numberless were the persons of all European nationalities, who came to London, and with whom it is not particularly fanciful to suppose that Shakespear may have exchanged ideas. Of the four men of letters above specified, Lodge produced, as we all know, the foundation-novel of *As You Like It*, while Young translated the *Diana* of Montemayor, where there is a hint of a passage in the *Winter's Tale*. When one turns over the pages of a volume such as the translation by Lewes Lewkenor of the *Spanish Mandevile of Miracles* of Torquemada, printed in 1600, one perceives one of the collateral helps, which served our dramatist somewhat in the same way and degree as equally trivial indications have served other original creators. A remark in a book, as in conversation, has often proved capable at the hands of a man of

* See Cohn's *Shakespeare in Germany*, 1865, p. xix.

genius of an indirect or ulterior bearing unimaginable by the writer or speaker.

Summing up the possibilities and more in the way of external aids to such learning as might have been beyond his personal reach, the information at our command tends to justify the opinion, that there was a surfeit, rather than a deficiency, of stores in nearly every direction; and the dramatic series may be securely regarded as the fruit of the direct intercourse of the poet with men and women of all ranks and conditions in town and country, supplemented by a moderate amount of desultory reading, which rapid study turned to usurious profit.

The diffusion of a limited acquaintance with the English drama in the Low Countries and Germany, through the visits of travellers and men of business to this country, at least from Tudor times, and through the performance of plays by our theatrical companies abroad, more particularly when our political interests were enlisted in the wars and dynastic struggles of the seventeenth century, favoured the study of our dramatic literature by Dutch and German scholars, and led in several cases to the adaptation to Continental stages and other purposes of pieces of which the originals have perished, or are no longer known in their primary form. Instances are recorded where natives of the Fatherland took back home with them books and tracts, which are yet on the shelves of public libraries abroad, and have even lived to acquire the reputation of uniqueness.* So far as Shakespear is concerned, this aspect of the question is mainly confined to a German version of portions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and a Dutch one of Martin Slaughter's lost work, *Alexander and Lodwick*, which exhibits points of resemblance to the *Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles*, the former comprised among the collective poetical works of Andreas Gryphius, published at Leipsic in 1661—3, the latter separately printed at Amsterdam in 1618.

* Did Prince Otto of Hesse obtain, when he was in London in 1611, that copy of Marlowe's *Edward II.*, 1594, now preserved at Cassel?

The Gryphius volume also includes the play of *Cardenio*, licensed for the press in 1653 as the work of Fletcher and Shakespear, and usually identified with the production entitled *Love's Pilgrimage*, in which Fletcher, Jonson, and Massinger are supposed to have had successive hands. In Gryphius it is called *Cardenio und Celinde, Oder Unglücklich Berlibete*. The link between ourselves and the Continent as regards translations or paraphrases into English has been more completely traced than the foreign loans from ourselves, as relations with other countries became more intimate. But this part and aspect of the subject have been sufficiently treated in readily accessible books.

The most signal example of the loan of a plot from a foreign production, which has never been translated into our language, presents itself in *Twelfth Night*, where we meet with the same story as in the once and long popular Italian work called the *Intronati*, of which, originally published in or before 1537, there was an impression in 1585, a date suggestive of the purchase by some Englishman abroad, through whom Shakespear obtained particulars of the contents. Hunter* has gone into this matter rather fully; and I see nothing to add to his account or view.

The theory that Shakespear, where he refers to the advantages and even necessity of foreign travel, is reflecting personal experiences, and has committed to paper the nett fruit of his continental tours as a member of a company of players, demands in my opinion more direct proof than we at present possess or are likely to gain. From the appearance in so early a drama as the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* of the mind and feeling of the writer on this subject we are the more warranted in concluding that here as everywhere else the voice made audible to us through the centuries is that of one, whose mission or rôle was to bring all our race into his service as spokesmen, and that in this particular case hearsay has been transmuted into the semblance of actual practice.

* *New Illustrations*, i., 391 et seqq.

The resources at Shakespear's disposal, where he thought fit to appeal for verifications or other aid in the treatment of foreign localities, persons, fashions, and languages, were, in fact, not only numerous and diversified, but more extensive than we have, or are likely to acquire, any means of ascertaining. From perfectly fortuitous circumstances, incidents and expressions have been traced to the most obscure and trivial origin, demonstrating that it was part of the great writer's plan to make his brain a store-house of every imaginable item which caught his eye or his ear at home and in London. The most signal illustration of this ubiquity, so to speak, is the late discovery, after much vain research, that he had taken the phrase, "Aroint thee, witch," from an entry in the borough records of Stratford. All was fish.

The poet passed through two successive stages of instruction : the first during his rural career prior to 1586, while he was mentally assimilating all the folk-lore of his own and the contiguous shires, and serving an apprenticeship to the drama by bearing a part in local theatricals conducted by countrymen, who only saw in him one of themselves ; the second and final stage, when he removed to London, practically as a permanence, and in like manner and in a greatly augmented measure turned to lucrative account his observance and receptivity. Nothing was too trivial for him, nothing too subtle, nothing too comprehensive.

The means at hand for deciphering the sense of a passage or allusion in a French, Italian, or classical work were ever considerable, since the influx of foreigners into England on educational missions commenced long before the time of the poet ; and where these scholars came in immediate contact with him, nothing could be more natural than that he should seek their incidental aid, or that they should communicate to him details, which might strike them as serviceable. They were in fact the media, through which in many other directions lack of personal knowledge was necessarily supplied by translators, interpreters, and secretaries. It is obvious that, before a man really started on a large undertaking,

he would make the book a topic of conversation, and even place portions of it in MSS. in the hands of those, whom he happened to know.*

The numerous quotations in Latin, Italian, French, and even Spanish, which are interspersed in the plays, and indeed sometimes with scanty propriety, only create surprise in the minds of those, who underestimate the poet's opportunities of mastering popular or favourite sayings, and procuring a friend to overlook any passage of a more elaborate kind in a foreign language as in *Henry V.*, or who, passing from one extreme to the other, forget how such a man, whatever his deficiencies may have been at the outset, had ample time during his prolonged sojourn in London among scholars, travellers, and linguists, to supply all that he originally lacked.

We put a play, as it has come to us from the pen of this artist side by side with the material, out of which he partly at least constructed it; and we are surprized at the contrast between the one and the other. Much of the difference and disparity are of course ascribable to the superior skill of Shakespear and to his nearly uniform practice of refusing to copy what was before him in a servile spirit; but much, again, has to be credited to the reduction of printed prototypes to the dramatic form, where there existed peculiar facilities for selection and modification. Thus our poet enjoyed, his marvellous faculties always granted, two distinct points of vantage: the antecedent play, which yielded at any rate a basis, and the prose or metrical story, which he was at liberty to use at his discretion. Many groundworks, themselves in their entirety impracticable, had left the press, and were ready to hand, when he began to write: Twyne's *Pattern of Painful Adventures*, 1576; Greene's *Pandosto*, 1588; Lodge's *Rosalynd*, 1590; and Holinshed and Plutarch† were at his elbow,

* So we find Cotgrave the lexicographer communicating in an extant letter of 1610 with some one deemed likely to be of service to him in his forthcoming book.

† North's translation first appeared in 1579.

whenever he chose to resort to them. It therefore follows that, when the dramatist started on his career, the circumstances were more favourable in respect to *prima stamina* than they had ever been before; and beyond such aids as I have named there were innumerable pamphlets and ballads multiplying themselves day by day, and illustrating many phases of European history, not to mention the English Froissart, which was apt to repay examination for *Henry V.*

What has been more or less satisfactorily christened *Shakespeare's Library* by no means, then, exhausts the stores, which were at the writer's command; and he had, as I have more than once noted, a farther advantage in the enrichment of the conversation of the time with the results of foreign travel and discovery. Apart from the harvest of actual observation, let us remember that the poet had been bred at one of the best of the old provincial grammar-schools, and that he found, on quitting it, an actual surfeit of advanced books of instruction or reference even outside those of a strictly historical complexion. For the market began about 1560 to swarm with an endless assortment of small manuals directly calculated for the use of teachers of languages and their pupils, travellers, and continental visitors, but from Shakespeare's point of view full of suggestions for dialogue and character. This family of literary aids the present writer has elsewhere* rather fully described and exemplified; with the compilers it is not extravagant to suppose a personal intimacy.

Too emphatic stress can be scarcely laid on the weighty share, which oral communication had on the writings of a man, who, if he glanced at accessible or current books, was intolerant of their permanent ownership; and I deem it as well to cite the view of Francis Douce,† immediately relevant to the *Tempest*, to the effect that the conversation of the time might have furnished,

* Hazlitt's *Schools, Schoolbooks, and Schoolmasters*, 1888. Unfortunately a considerable proportion of the small edition was destroyed by fire.

† *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, i., 5.

or at least suggested, some particulars, that are not to be found in any of the printed accounts. The familiarity of the dramatist, through a conversational medium, with certain subjects and authors, not available in an English dress, forcibly applies to such a writer as Rabelais, who occurs in *As You Like It*, pursuant, no doubt, to more or less appreciative comments on him and his work in London literary circles.

Instances indeed occurred, where verbal communications miscarried in the sense, that Shakespear, to whose ears so many different and conflicting items of news and knowledge were constantly coming, could not invariably retain the precise facts, or was the recipient of an incorrect account. Reference has been incidentally made to the enthusiastic notice of Giulio Romano, painter, architect, and engineer, in the *Winter's Tale*. He is described in the play as a sculptor, and the scene is laid in Sicily. Romano was not a sculptor, and was wholly unconnected with that island; but he lived till 1546, and there may have been a tradition in Shakespear's time that this "rare Italian master" was a very expert hand at portraiture, which was true enough; but the statue of Paulina's mother was almost assuredly not from his hand. Wherever the poet fell in with the information, he misunderstood or forgot the particulars; but that they were oral there is slight doubt; and if one may argue from the known to the unknown, an imperfect or inaccurate statement by a friend or a casual acquaintance was apt to be responsible for faulty notions about points beyond the immediate or personal cognizance of the dramatist. Since it has been contended that he resorted for his purpose in this case to the original Italian of Vasari, all that can be said is that, had he done so, he would not perhaps have made the mistake.

The characters of Shakespear, drawn from life, as distinguished from those borrowed from books or hearsay, have become, from the long lapse of time and the fundamental changes of sentiment and usage, sufficiently archæological to demand editors

and scholiasts. But when these characters were originally depicted on paper, and represented on the boards, they were such as spectators of average opportunities and powers of observation had no difficulty in recognizing and appreciating. The majority of the audience might find it requisite to accept on trust retrospective historical portraitures, emanating from authors whose writings were beyond their reach, and, again, they might not always penetrate the subtle and delicate processes of thought in the speakers charged with the delivery of philosophical speculations. But the traits of common human nature, allusions to customs and beliefs, citations of popular stories and songs, went home to all without the glossarial aid, which nearly all at present require. The author transferred to the stage, through the medium of his pen, real men and women, whom he had seen with his own eyes, with a suitable deference to theatrical exigencies ; and those who attended his theatre, if they did not detect their own likenesses, imagined that they detected people not dissimilar from themselves. They heard the language, which was on all lips, and the feelings, which all could reciprocate. They asked for no dictionary of archaisms. It was, one may apprehend, the aim of Shakespear to divest of an air of antiquity, as far as possible, all his impersonations, and hence sometimes sprang his anachronisms.

All evidences adding to the already immensely increased knowledge, that Shakespear faithfully reflects in his admirable writings the language, the spirit, and the usages of his own age, are deserving of notice and preservation. The ludicrous incident in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* of Falstaff concealing himself in the buckbasket carries on the face of it an appearance of improbability, looking at the physical dimensions of the excellent knight, till we see that in those days baskets were not uncommonly employed by porters to convey home persons who were, as we should say, drunk and incapable, and who did not wish to come under the cognizance of the watch. There is an anecdote of Sir Joceline Percy, who was born in 1578, was knighted in

1599, and died in 1631, where a son of the Earl of Northumberland engages a porter to take him in his basket to the place where the knight lodged, and where the fellow, on his arrival, cleverly eludes observation, and deters spectators by giving out that his freight has the *falling* sickness.*

Nevertheless, the unlikelihood of Falstaff meeting with a basket of this or any other kind capable of forming a temporary refuge for his person, so far from disappearing, preserves its original vigour.

The critical rejoinder of Jonson, that it would have been well if Shakespear, instead of never blotting a line, had blotted a thousand, is in harmony with the persuasion of many, who peruse the plays and poems (especially the Sonnets). Taking the heavy aggregate, there is an abundance of passages, which might have been revised, of lines, which might have been cancelled, of phrases, which have the air of having been insufficiently considered; and the present point is the more remarkable, since, on the contrary, there are hundreds of instances, where the texture and language of a sentence, as left by the poet, could not be altered without injury to the extent of a single word. This inconsistency and inequality are not easily explainable, because we do not know with any degree of precision how the poet worked, nor in what way the additions to the first (posthumous) folio were made. The weakness is particularly visible in the Sonnets, inasmuch that one is led, as I have stated, to entertain a doubt, whether they are genuine as a whole; and another respect is in the rhymed tags and certain current allusions introduced on the spur of the moment, like the mention of the loss of Marlowe in *As You Like It*—a deplorable couplet, disfiguring that beautiful drama. In fact, it is the transcendent merit of Shakespear at his best, which throws into such conspicuous relief inferior passages, and leads us to ask ourselves, whether they are due to the same pen. The growth of experience and taste in such a case as the

* Thoms' *Anecdotes and Traditions*, 1839, p. 65-6.

present is a fact too obvious for discussion. We have only to place side by side *Love's Labor's Lost* and the *Taming of a Shrew* with *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and the *Tempest*; and a comparison of the *Induction* to the first-named piece and the Players' scene in *Hamlet* demonstrates, how the poet chastened and matured his earlier comic or humorous manner; and perchance the serious vein would have been permitted to predominate to a larger extent, if the entire succession of dramas had not been written with a primary view to the approval and applause of an average audience.

We are all aware that *Hamlet* recalls to the Players a drama—an excellent one indeed—which was never acted, quoth he, because it pleased not the million; it was *caviare* to the general.* Our poet understood his business no less than his art.

Such unanimity has prevailed respecting the defective culture of Shakespear, that we stand in danger of receiving the idea, as it has been transmitted down to us from his own age, and as it is almost compassionately recorded in the writings of others. The illiteracy of the poet, for which the evidence is far from clear, if we recollect that the acquaintance with certain points in history, geography, and science was in his day, and long after, very imperfect, was, no doubt, at an early stage, a piece of criticism levelled against him by men, like Jonson, of larger academical acquirements, and the object of the stricture must have been sensible of its share of truth, and have applied himself, with the aid, partly of books, partly of more learned friends, to the removal or mitigation of the fault, insomuch that here and there classical references are introduced, as, for instance, in the dialogue between Launcelot Gobbo and Jessica, in the *Merchant of Venice*, with total unfitness. To rebut the charge of want of scholarship the author committed the not unusual error of ascribing scholarship to persons, who were not likely to possess any, and on the other hand of indiscreetly bringing in unsuitable quotations. Gobbo, as a Venetian or Italian, very naturally uses the term *Via* for *Away*!

* Act II., Scene 2.

but in the same speech he betrays his ignorance by speaking of "*devil incarnation*."

In *As You Like it* Touchstone is made to say: "I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths"; to which Jaques rejoins: "O knowledge ill-inhabited! worse than Jove in a thatched house." The allusion is to the residence of Ovid in Pontus, of which he wrote a metrical account; but Shakespear most probably caught from some one the piece of personal history, and gives Touchstone the credit of knowing a point in classical lore, of which he was profoundly unaware. The comment of Jaques may serve as a reproof both for the English poet and his character. The definition of Ovid as capricious (the Italian *capriccioso*) or goatish may have had something to do with the goats of Audrey, and almost betrays such a man as Florio in the way of a coach; the epithet *honest* is less reconcilable.

Elsewhere he cites the comedies of Plautus and Seneca as the best, without being fully aware of the immense difference between the two writers. The former he perhaps knew chiefly, if not solely, from the English version of the *Menæchmi*, 1595, on which he is held to have partly based the *Comedy of Errors*. The latter was accessible to him in the translation of 1581, but has not been credited with laying him under any literary obligation.

I trust, however, that I shall be able to induce many to cross over with me to the other side, when I declare the opinion, not that Shakespear was a scholar in the sense that Jonson, Selden, and Drayton were, but that, having been grounded in one of the most celebrated provincial grammar-schools—that of his native town—he devoted his utmost energy and attention to the supply of his educational deficiencies by fruitful contact with classical students, travellers, and linguists. Jonson, whose sentiments and views were apt to fluctuate in obedience to passing impressions, recorded his notions about Shakespear, when the latter was no

more, in terms to some extent qualified, yet on the whole significant of his sense of the possession by the departed poet of exceptionally high gifts. To that appreciation I shall revert; but here I desire to find room for the notice, which Mr. Lee prints in his biography,* of the estimate by Jonson in his *Poetaster*, 1602, just when his contemporary was lavishing on the world some of his finest, most unapproachable, and most characteristic compositions; where he, curiously enough, makes Shakespear's natural genius take precedence of all rules of art, and prognosticates his immortality. This splendid homage may be taken to have been committed to paper when Jonson had had the opportunity of founding an opinion, not only on some of the historical plays, but on the *Merry Wives* on the one hand and *Hamlet* on the other.

His dramatic compositions, instead of being founded on local or popular incidents, are almost with the single exception of the *Merry Wives*, which was influenced by the association of Windsor with the Court, either historical or continental, which may be thought to impugn the authorship of such pieces as *Arden of Faversham*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and the *Puritan*, beyond such slight touches as he might have introduced in the capacity of an Editor. With the *Reign of Edward III.*, 1596, it may be thought to stand rather differently, and on more than a single ground; for this piece entered into the historical series, with which the hand and name of the poet are so closely associated, and while certain passages are generally allowed to betray his presence, the last line of the 94th Sonnet is common to the drama, as if, like Goldsmith, he liked to reiterate a phrase or a figure which had pleased him. His own proverbial maxim:

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin”

was, in its usually accepted sense, splendidly exemplified in the poet's audacious disregard of all unities, and reliance for success and approbation on a profound truth of insight and an amazing

* *Life of Shakespear*, 1899, p. 174.

intellectual fecundity. He, in common, according to Florio, with all our English playwrights, made havoc of all history, biography, and chronology; yet he produced work of a quality which makes us lose sight of rules, and forgive the violence offered on nearly every page to the prejudices even of a moderately educated reader. The ranger over the universal domain of human thought and wisdom, many of whose lines are familiar to millions ignorant of their source, is not to be constrained by scholastic and local technicalities. His *dramatis personæ* were drawn from all sides, and became naturalized subjects of the British crown almost as much as the actors who filled the parts.

We have to consider and weigh even such a writer in the aggregate. It was at one time the fashion among some readers to quote him as an *irregular* genius. But such a piece of criticism, instead of being viewed in an unfavourable light and sense, ought to be received as flattery, since all that it can signify is that in certain places Shakespear approached a little more nearly to the normal level, while by his higher flights, more frequent and more conspicuous in some of his maturer work—his tragedies, above all—he makes the rest appear to us by comparison less brilliant and less exceptional. It would not be very difficult to select from his writings specimens, which in a detached form might strike a person unacquainted with the merits of the author as mediocre or commonplace; and the same experiment applied to any great man of letters would be apt to lead to a similar result. Homer sometimes nodded, we are told; and the greatest minds occasionally fall short of their highest capability. Shakespear in one way is entitled to more indulgent consideration even than a writer who, like Montaigne, subjected his text to careful and repeated correction; yet this standpoint, again, offers a saving clause; for, looking at the extent, variety, and compass of the Plays, it is surely wonderful that, in spite of the author's unfortunate licence to his printers, in addition to his failure, to revise the

manuscripts, there has come down to us all such a monument as no other age, no other country, can shew.

The general estimate of Jonson, however, is not altogether untrue or unfair, especially if we place ourselves in his situation. For, if we demur to his approximate collocation of Kyd with Shakespear, it is certain that Marlowe and Lyly were inspiring influences, and that their work was not inattentively studied by Shakespear for his own melodramatic and mythological creations. The debt of one sort to Lyly in his fairy scenes and songs is as clear as that of another and less momentous sort in his *Euphues*.

We are enabled to look at the whole question in perspective, and to exercise a judgment based on the modern canons of comparative criticism. Jonson was not so situated. He evidently entertained an exalted estimate of the powers of Shakespear, and preserved to the last his private friendship with him. But he equally knew Marlowe, and had facilities superior to ours for measuring the relative pretensions of the two writers, and for learning the extent of the indebtedness of Shakespear to his predecessor in tragic poetry. Considering that in 1602, when he printed his *Poetaster*, Marlowe had been seven years in his grave, and that the Stratford dramatist, and not himself, was generally admitted to have not only succeeded to the first place, but to have far outshone his precursor, the tone and attitude of Jonson may be accepted as magnanimous, particularly if, of which there can be barely any doubt, for the *Virgil* of the Jonsonian piece we are at liberty to substitute another name.

The prodigious disparity between Shakespear and his dramatic contemporaries was not only imperfectly evident to the immediate age, but to many succeeding generations; and it is almost the case that his full honours have come to him only within the memory of some yet living.

By what process the poet assisted his memory by committing to paper impressions, remarks, names, and other details, which he might not require for immediate use, we are only able to guess

from the common habit of the time, both here and abroad, where writers carried their tablets. Montaigne particularly refers to his in one of his Essays,* and seems to have kept them by him, even, perhaps, when they had served their purpose; and Shakespear makes Hamlet † speak of them. They were issued in book-form for the pocket, and although the majority of copies has perished, at least six impressions are recorded between 1577 and 1611.‡ They were, of all ephemerides, the least likely to survive. Yet, is it not perfectly natural and legitimate to apprehend that the poet gave his character—his *alter ego*—what he himself was wont to use? These tablets were part of the vast heritage of modern Europe from the ancients.

* Book I., ch. 19.

† Act i., scene 5. When the Ghost has told his tale, the Prince exclaims : “ My tables, my tables ! meet it is I set it down.”

‡ Hunter's *New Illustrations of Shakespear*, ii. 225, where these aids to remembrance are carried back to 1523, or thereabout.

CHAPTER IX.

Proneness of Shakespear to Farce. Its Origin and Motives. Prominence on title-pages of comic impersonations. The Clown on the old stage. Tarlton, Kemp, and Armin. Free use of the names of real personages in Plays. Oldcastle and Fastolfe. Parsons the Jesuit as a critic of Shakespear. The Boar's Head. Ariel and Puck. Illustrations of critical indecorum. The snatches and fragments of ballads introduced into the plays and their frequent impropriety.

WHEN Shakespear began to write for the stage in London, after a certain desultory training at home among his young friends and neighbours far and near, the farcical element had long been an indispensable feature in performances, even where the ground-plot was of a diametrically opposite drift. This feature entered into dramatic spectacles, when they ceased to be wholly religious or allegorical, and was found to constitute the most attractive part of the entertainment; a study of the earlier volumes of the last edition of Dodsley will shew anyone the stress and reliance laid on the Vice or Clown; and the same experience manifested itself abroad, where actors of English pieces adapted for continental use, foreigners or otherwise, learned to depend on the comic side, and to make that the leading, instead of the subsidiary, business.

So we see that Shakespear, with his natural insight, wrote to some extent down to the popular grasp and demand; and I hold that he did so not altogether without a certain share of genuine relish and complacency, an inheritance from early rural associations. A Yorkshireman, George Daniel of Beswick, member of a Knightly family, and himself a votary of the Muses, testifies to the weight which the popular impersonations of the poet carried in his case, where he says in *A Vindication of Poetry*:—

“Draiton is sweet and smooth, though not exact
 Perhaps to stricter eyes, yet he shall live
 Beyond their malice. *To the scene and act*
Read comic Shakespeare —”

Daniel had from his own account, in his prolix effort entitled *Trinarchodia*, 1650, witnessed the performance of those dramas in which Sir John Falstaff successively appeared, and describes the personal appearance of the fat Knight on the boards, which had yielded him in bygone years sincere enjoyment. This gentleman came into the world in the very year in which Shakespear left it—an inadequate compensation!

The mind of the poet could scarcely fail to have been powerfully impressed and influenced by the succession of pieces appertaining either to the category of mere farces or drolleries, or to the department of regular comedy with a conspicuous share of humorous incident, which issued from the press in the half century antecedent to his career as a dramatist, and which were readily available in shops and on stalls. Such performances as *Thersites* and *Jack Fugger*, *Ralph Roister Doister* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and the rest of the dramatic library, which constituted the earlier portion of what is known as Dodsley's Collection, were doubly serviceable to Shakespear, inasmuch as they not only grounded him in the rudiments of his art, but shewed the class of amusement, which the general taste demanded and enjoyed, if not as the main element, at any rate as an auxiliary one.

The attention of the dramatist was drawn to Plautus by the English version of the *Menæchmi*, published in 1595; but at a prior date an adaptation of the *Amphitruo* of the same Roman author had appeared under the above-mentioned title of *Jack Fugger*—a piece of dramatic humour, which must have commended itself to Shakespear, whatever its literary or artistic shortcomings may have been in his eyes.

The *gods* have, from the most ancient times, jealously asserted their rights. Seneca,* speaking of the *Mimes* of Publius Syrus,

* Beloe's *Aulus Gellius*, iii., 301.

implies that they were calculated by their language for the upper gallery. Shakespear here obeyed a traditional demand; and it was, we may be sure, no reluctant compliance.

A glance at some of the dramas in their original printed state will satisfy us that the comic effects were a source of great reliance, if not to the author, to his publisher—arguably to both. This is particularly evident from the prominence accorded to the fat and ridiculous Knight in the *Merry Wives*, as published in 1602; and a second feature, which makes itself conspicuous from the outset, is the presence of the *conceit*. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labor's Lost* are termed "excellent conceited comedies"; it was a homage to a different and higher type of visitor; and indeed the *Merry Wives* is equally so described. The dramatist angled with two kinds of bait: conceited comedies and lamentable tragedies; and where Shakespear so far outshone his contemporaries was, one feels, in his happy reconciliation of sallies of refined wit and creations of a splendid and exuberant fancy with popularity of manner and form.

The title-pages of the early quarto plays were, it is to be more than suspected, the handiwork of the stationer, who issued them; and they are not, on the whole, immoderately pretentious. Yet in that of the *Merry Wives*, 1602, it is deserving of attention, how the humorous and laughable side is accentuated, and how clearly intentional prominence is given to Falstaff, Sir Hugh Evans, Shallow, Slender, Pistol, and Nym. The authorship of the alluring forefront is perhaps betrayed by the error in describing Sir Hugh as "the Welsh Knight." The piece must have been viewed on the stage as a farce rather than a regular comedy, and when it was presented in book-form, there was an aim to put the same attribute distinctly forward.

The discovery, which, as I take occasion to shew, was common to the Continent, of the vulgar predilection for what was entertaining rather than instructive or artistic, accounts for the English series of *Drolls*, which were the comic portions of

plays altered to suit the requirements of showmen at fairs and markets. All that the popular voice demanded in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, was an interlude called *Bottom the Weaver*; and this, and others constructed on the same principle, proved saleable in a printed shape. The clown usurped the first place in the cast.

This was a departure from the complete presentation of a drama distinct from the case, where as in 1601 a scene from *Richard II.* or *Henry VI.* was given on political grounds in several parts of London, and equally so from the occasional practice of curtailing a performance for exhibition at Court, as in the abridged versions of *Much Ado* in 1613 under the names of *Benedick and Beatrice* and of *Twelfth Night* shown in the early part of 1623 under the title of *Malvolio*, or once more, as in the revival of *Henry VIII.*, about the period of the Restoration at a school, almost inevitably in an abridged shape.*

The early *status* of the Clown in the drama necessarily underwent many changes and vicissitudes. In the rudimentary and transitional productions, which fill the opening volumes of Dodsley's Collection in the last edition this personage, in his capacity as the Vice, is seen to occupy a rank proportioned to the character of the piece, but to fill a part superior to that, which was eventually allotted to him under the more modern appellation. A few men of genius, such as Tarlton and Kemp, lent special importance to this feature in theatrical exhibitions both before and during the age of Shakespear; and their performances, although from their nature and object eminently and primarily ludicrous, were equally distinct from the later performance—almost in dumb shew in the days of Grimaldi—and from the still more contemporary and vulgar treatment, which reduced the clown to a motley and garrulous buffoon. On the Elizabethan stage his presence was felt to be essential as a leaven and a relief to the more serious business; and there is a strong probability, that an

* See Notes under *Henry VIII.*

actor of such a class, who could hold an audience, was not only very valuable, but exercised his own fancy and discretion in utterances not found in his copy, still less in the printed book transmitted to us, which is precisely what his successors have continued to do.

The almost unquestionable contact of Shakespear as a youth with Tarlton, that great master in the art; was an excellent introduction to a knowledge of the means of drawing houses; and I shall be surprized, if I am mistaken in my theory, that in this department Shakespear should be regarded as Tarlton's pupil.

Besides Tarlton and Kemp, a man highly distinguished as a comic artist was Robert Armin, who also resembled them in his contributions to literature. Armin had belonged to the Curtain in 1600; but in 1605 he was on the staff of the Globe; he so describes himself on the title-pages of two successive editions of a tract printed by him in those years; and of course Shakespear and he were necessarily intimate. He perhaps helped to console the poet for the loss of his old Shoreditch friend.

There are many enough, who might plead guilty to a relish for the humorous scenes in the old play, where they are of their kind excellent, and next to them perhaps the sublimely tragic impress us, yet in so different a way, and so much more involuntarily.

A line of distinction has certainly to be drawn, however, between the humorous vein perceptible in Falstaff and other characters, where the author indulges with apparent gusto his own propensity for genuine wit and fun, and those rather tiresome and weak tongue-combats, where he obeys the fashion of the day. The comic and autobiographical elements are found in a thinner strain in the later plays and the Roman series; and we feel the loss. The sublime tragical and philosophical passages or scenes have of course their own splendid merit and irresistible fascination, especially such conceptions as Hamlet, Jaques, Lear, and even

Timon; and we seem to think that we should know sadly less of Shakespear, were we without the prince of Denmark, in whose name and in the *Sonnets* he so fully and preciously reveals to us his own personality. Yet in the Comedies he was most himself—his saner, healthier self. Certain of the dramatic works might be happily bartered for one or two more pieces, unfolding farther particulars of the life, and completing or verifying imperfect or dubious clues; and Shakespear might not be emptied of much of his divinity, in Charles Lamb's phrase, if a few characters and passages were cancelled.

The usurpation of the names of living personages, where purely fictitious and fanciful ones might have served equally well, is quite characteristic of the poet, and almost a foible. There is in the *Merry Wives* the physician Caius, a sort of droll, with his Anglo-French jargon. The *name* is evidently taken from a well-known Cambridge scholar and antiquary, who was living within the time of Shakespear; but the personality and character seem to be a composite invention; the real Caius has been thought to have been a Rosicrucian, yet he had little enough in common with his theatrical namesake, and the latter is not impossibly a portrait of an eccentric medical man, who practised at Windsor about the time, with the broken English added as an attraction or a disguise. Dr. Caius speaks broken English, but barely a Frenchman's broken English. The *Duke de Jarmany* would have probably had the same nondescript gibberish put into his mouth, had he been brought on the stage. The diction of Caius is *sui generis*; as mine host of the Garter puts it, he "hacks our English." Those—and there must have been many—who had been familiar with the real personage, were apt to feel some mystification at his dramatic presentment, claiming a nationality not his own, and murdering a language which was so.

A parallel case of the adoption of actual names is found in the Welsh parson Evans, for it seems that there was a curate at Cheltenham just a little anterior to the date of the play, one Sir

John Evans, whose burial is recorded under 1574, and of whom the poet might have casually heard. Dramatic licence seems to have been almost unlimited. The play of *Arden of Faversham*, founded on a terrible murder, was played on the stage when members of the family concerned were still living.

By his nomenclature he ostensibly set far less store than by his portraiture. Where he has not bestowed appellations belonging to real and almost contemporary persons, he has been content, especially in his subsidiary characters, to bestow the first name which occurred to his mind. Such an one as Petrucchio, in the *Taming of a Shrew*, was within his hearing or knowledge when the drama was in preparation; it is found in Gascoigne's *Supposes*, 1566; there was Ludovico Petrucchio, who was concerned in a book on the Spanish Armada, and Petrucchio Ubaldini, who published several works at London and elsewhere about the same time. The adoption of the name was Shakespear's, for in the foundation-piece of 1594 it does not occur.

Not only in the person of Falstaff and in the *Merry Wives* and other productions, where he presents himself, do we discern the relish of the author for low comedy—one occasionally perhaps carried too far—but there is the appeal to the less educated spectators in the jargon put into the mouths of foreigners here and elsewhere, picked up from intercourse even with real persons, who are sufficiently numerous at this date, and substantiated by the polyglot vocabularies and conversation-books, which were found indispensable, as habits of travelling abroad became more general here and on the Continent.* The Elizabethan Englishman possessed a fair acquaintance with French and even Italian, nor was the Dutch language by any means unknown; but German was scarcely at all understood, and there were no educational works at that time devoted to it. Germany was almost as much a *terra incognita* in the sixteenth century as America or Polynesia, and the average play-goer had the vaguest idea of a Duke de Jarmany, and might

* Hazlitt's *Schools, Schoolbooks, and Schoolmasters*, 1888, p. 255, *et seqq.*

very well imagine a cousin-german and a German cousin to be one and the same. The prevailing ignorance is illustrated by the successful impersonation by swindlers of representatives of some German potentate, as commemorated in the *Merry Wives*. The strange word *Garmombles* may have been an imperfect grasp of *Graf mompelgart* or a distortion of the name itself.

The name of Falstaff, and his association with the Boar's Head in Cheap, have awakened a good deal of discussion and speculation. Shakespear, having abandoned the name of Oldcastle (Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps explicitly asserts, by the command of the Queen, on the complaint of the Cobham family), substituted another, which appeared to some a thinly disguised form of that of an ancient and distinguished family in Norfolk and Wiltshire, one member of which, Sir John Fastolfe, had fought at Agincourt. The enlistment of names in plays is so often fortuitous or obscure, that there is a great difficulty in tracing their sources. Here the poet found ready to his hand the owners of the Boar's Head in Southwark, which really existed in the time of Henry IV., and used his poetical licence by transferring it to the other side of the river, where such a house stood in his own day, and converting *Fastolfe* into Falstaff. There is a tradition that the emendation by which Oldcastle was thus superseded, did not escape the notice of the Fastolfes; but if any direct objection was raised, it was not pressed, or was not successful; and *Falstaff* remained. The resentment of the Caistor family might have been aggravated by the alleged circumstance that Sir John Fastolfe displayed certain personal peculiarities not dissimilar from his dramatic counterpart.

But the surrender of the original name was intentionally or otherwise left incomplete, for in *Henry IV.* Prince Henry addresses the Knight as "my old lad of the castle." As regards the name itself, it is that of several places in England and Ireland, and even of a residence near Hereford.

Parsons the Jesuit was never sorry to have an opportunity of casting a stone at the Protestants and even at the Lollards, for in

a work published by him in 1604, when the honoured name of Oldcastle had been withdrawn, so far as we know, from the dramas, where Falstaff now appears, he (Parsons) introduces Oldcastle as "a Ruffian-Knight as all England knoweth, and commonly brought in by comediantes on their stages"; which is hardly a correct statement, and the writer characteristically serves his own immediate purpose by representing him as put to death for *robberies* and rebellion under Henry V. Parsons gave a religious opponent, who had long ceased to agitate the world by his sectarian views, the benefit of the delinquencies, which are ascribed by the Elizabethan playwright to a totally distinct person.

This confusion in the cases of Falstaff and Fastolfe, the two Bardolphs, and (in *As You Like It*) the two Jaques, appears to be a Shakespearian idiosyncrasy. Such a thing is unknown to the modern drama; but whether it struck the original audiences as an error or blemish is another matter; the absence of playbills rendered the fault less conspicuous. All that transpires is that the Fastolfes were affronted by the resemblance to their name of that of a disreputable character, aggravated by his association with an inn, of which they were the owners. Shakespear gave way so far as to suppress the name of Oldcastle; religious sentiment was here to be considered and propitiated, and the Cobhams had influence at Court; but the Fastolfes were not successful in obtaining a similar concession. There is no proof of official interposition in the latter instance.

Long before the dramas in which Falstaff figures were written, Eastcheap had grown celebrated as a centre for houses of entertainment. In the *World and the Child*, an interlude, 1522, there is the following passage:—

"Yea, and we shall be right welcome I dare well say,
In East Cheap for to dine;
And then we will with Lombards at passage play,
And at the Pope's Head sweet wine assay."

And in a very early naval song we have:—

“He that will in East Cheap eat a goose so fat,
With harp, pipe, and song,
Must lie in Newgate on a mat,
Be the night never so long.”

Lydgate celebrated the locality in his *London Lickpenny*. The Dagger, in Cheap, is mentioned in *A C. Mery Talys*, 1526, and still survived in the days of the poet. But I merely adduce such allusions to shew that Shakespear had no lack of illustrative material at his very elbow, when he portrayed these festive and popular scenes; and they serve as justifying documents.

The melodious appellation *Rosalind* was by no means new to English literature, scarcely to Shakespear himself, when he adopted it as one of the *personæ* in *As You Like It*. For in the cast of *Love's Labor's Lost* the slightly variant form *Rosaline* presents itself. But *Rosalind* had been rendered tolerably familiar by Spenser, first in his *Shepherd's Calendar*, 1579, and again in his *Faëry Queen*, 1590, and, once more, by Lodge, in his dull and pedantic novel, which equally saw the light in the last-mentioned year. We do not absolutely know what immediately induced Shakespear to appropriate the name; but as he seems to have glanced at the black letter pamphlet of Lodge, and was ostensibly indebted to it for a general suggestion and outline of the story, the novelist may be entitled to the credit of this contribution. The criticism on Lodge applies only to his prose text, and his treatment of the subject, which betray the influence of Lyly, as some of his vocabulary does that of Spenser; but the lyrical portions are excellent. His book continued to have a sale down to the Civil War: but after 1609 the stationer does not seem to have discerned any lingering virtue in the feature which commended itself to Shakespear so long ago, and does so to us to-day. The conceit had had its run; but for a season it held possession of the public ear, and even in 1604 it retained sufficient fascination to prevail on Thomas Newton to christen a volume *A Fragrant*

Posy made of Three Flowers: Rose, Rosalind, and Rosemary. The charm discovered in *Rosalind* extended to no other characters except *Adam Spencer*, who is a compound in Lodge of the Adam and Jaques of the play, in both cases, especially the latter, with a measureless difference, and *Ganymede*, which rather awkwardly becomes in the play, as it is in the romance, the designation of the disguised Rosalind. The *Alinda* of Lodge Shakespear transformed into *Cælia*, which was just beginning to enjoy a fairly durable acceptance; but he remembered his original, when he made her take the name of *Aliena* in their flight to the forest.

In christening other *personæ*, the author may seem to betray an indifference, and to have taken any fantastic forms, which struck his fancy. On our ears they are apt to jar, at least; yet we cannot be sure that, uncouth as they may be, they did not answer the object in view—the amusement of the occupiers of penny seats. The name of Autolycus necessitates a few words. Shakespear, let us suppose, had heard the hero and his reputed attributes mentioned by his learned acquaintances; but the mere name might have met his eye in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid; Chapman's *Odyssey* was too late for the purpose; and most of the authorities, which notice Autolycus, Athenæus included, were scarcely accessible in former days even to the scholar. At any rate the idea conveyed to the dramatist of this character in real life was singularly imperfect and inaccurate, or he has merely adopted the appellation, in the same way that he has adopted others, without any strict historical propriety. Master Sly was doubtless a local obligation. But the name was peculiar. There was in 1611 a Clement Sly, who is described as a fencer and a gallant of London. He closed his career at that date on the scaffold.

The examples of critical indecorum and unfitness are not restricted to the comic parts or to the less mature efforts, for, by way of illustration, the fascinating conception of Ariel in the *Tempest* presents, on closer scrutiny, a serious want of homogeneity. Such a charge demands justification; and it is not difficult to

offer it; nor in a minor degree to do so in respect to Puck, who is the corresponding character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Both creations are spiritual and superhuman; and it is here that the inconsistency and contradiction lie, partly because in the delineation of such properties there must always be a difficulty in fixing a limit and a need to be perpetually on one's guard against the incongruous. I suppose Puck to be a development of the Robin Goodfellow of prose fiction, a spirit which, under different names, seems to have been common to European folk-lore. In Act ii., Sc. I, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and within a few lines, the poet appears to portray a character out of harmony with itself; for he makes Oberon, addressing Puck, to say:—

“That very time I saw, *but thou could'st not*,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth—”

Yet, just beneath, we have:—

“*Puck*: I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes.”

Then, again, where Puck reappears, having procured the narcotic juice, he cannot at first find the object of his quest; and, a little farther, where Oberon comes on, and to him Puck, the former has to be advised what has occurred. Then Puck commits a mistake by applying the juice to the wrong person. So throughout this mythological feature in the piece.

When we turn to the *Tempest* and consider the part of Ariel it is not the same thing, and Ariel is as superior to Puck as the *Tempest* itself is to the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. He realises in an immeasurably higher degree our ideal of a spirit, incorporeal, invisible, omnipotent: yet he is represented as having been a captive and a thrall under the dominion of a witch, whom Prospero reduced to submission; and the sole evidence of the source of the latter's power consists of his possession of a book and a staff. He is realised to us as a deposed Italian Prince, who has presumably studied in earlier life and during his tenure of authority the magical art, which enables him to win the island from a

potent necromancer, Sycorax, mother of Caliban, to liberate Ariel, whom he makes his instrument, and to convert Caliban into a serf. The latter is depicted as a mere clown, destitute of the maternal gifts, yet sensible of the wrong which he has suffered.

But the key to the control, first of Sycorax, and then of Prospero, over Ariel can hardly be said to be fully forthcoming. The power of this spirit is more conspicuous in some ways than that of his master, yet he is successively betrayed into servitude by a witch and an unprofessional student of the occult sciences; and the superhuman faculty of the latter seems to be mainly limited to the command of the services of a spirit, who is lord of all save his own freedom. In his conception of Ariel, Shakespear recollected Puck; and the mightier fairy combines, as we perceive, some of the qualifications of Robin Goodfellow or Brownie. Where all is imaginary, the license is infinite; but it must be nicely adjusted, and the very luxuriance of the author's fancy has led him here and there into discrepancies.

The presentation of Ariel in the song, which is so familiar to us all :—

“ Where the bee sucks, there lurk I.”

is absolutely incompatible with the notion, which the poet elsewhere gives us, of the nature either of Puck or of Ariel. A spirit may have no dimensions; we have no warrant for defining its aspect or compass; but it must be affirmed and allowed that we have before us in the two plays pieces of mythological invention irreconcilable with each other. Even the most palpable fable or fiction has to shew an oneness.

In Oriental fiction, where the operations of Nature are suspended with Oriental despotism, these matters are better managed; the transformation or transition is instantaneous; the illusion is absolute; and so it is to a considerable extent in the Teutonic folk-lore. For a magician or necromancer there is neither time nor space; it is pure volition.

His debt to anterior or contemporary literature for his fairy

mythology does not appear to exceed the barest hints, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, so dependent on this feature, betrays slight traces indeed of direct external assistance, although the influence of Lyly has been put forward with some show of reason. The burlesque performance, to which the interlude amounts, was perhaps suggested by a poem on the same subject from the pen of Dunstan Gale, ready for the press in 1596, and not improbably printed, yet not at present known in so early an issue; and this might tend to fix the production of the drama between that date and 1600, when it appeared in type.

The erudite and interesting monograph of Mr. Chappell on the Music of the Olden Time touches our subject at many points, particularly in respect to the display of acquaintance with musical terminology in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. But singing, accompanied by instrumental harmony or otherwise, was universal during the reigns of Elizabeth and her successor, as we know that it once more became under Charles II. There Shakespear could work *ad vivum*, and might have under his observation day by day the means of elaborating and verifying his descriptions. Nor where he painted foreign scenes and allusions of such a class, was he so prone to misdirection, since so many of the composers and musicians in England in his day were either Frenchmen or Italians, or countrymen who had acquired part of their education abroad.

There appears to be no satisfactory solution of the origin or source of many of those whimsical snatches and fragments which the poet, apart from complete songs or ballads, has introduced into his plays; and the reason for the difficulty and obscurity may be the natural fate of all such ephemerides, more especially, when they were not committed to type or even to writing. "King Stephen was a noble peer" "Then up he rose," and a few others, strike one as having been playful inventions of the dramatist. But it is truly hazardous to venture on any conclusion. Chappell's list of tunes and airs, though very copious, is still imperfect enough, and hundreds of these popular jingles have doubtless perished with-

out leaving a trace behind them. The same thing is happening under our own eyes.

Shakespear, more especially when he had acquired a substantial stake in the theatres, to which he attached himself, was obliged to keep a side-look to the galleries; and hence arise these *ad captandum* features even in his ripest work, proving his sense of a need for reaching the less critical portion of the audience. Otherwise it would be inconceivable that in *Othello* he could deem it expedient to insert such grossly incongruous fragments as are put into the mouth of Iago; and in the *Tempest*, composed even later—about 1611-12—there are vestiges of the same leaven explainable and justifiable only on the same ground.

That Shakespear lent himself to the popular appetite for the humorous element, even when it was inappropriate, we have no need to feel surprize; but he makes noble amends by giving us some of the most beautiful and captivating lyrics in the language, melodious productions which we may be sure, charmed Elizabethan audiences at least as intensely as they do us in the book at the present hour. The first song of Autolycus in the *Winter's Tale*: "When daffodils begin to peer," is on the exact lines of some which occur in "Englands Helicon," 1600—a volume of the highest interest, in which I am disposed to recognise the poet as more than a contributor; and in the structure of the dainty little composition, with which *Twelfth Night* concludes, we are reminded of one or two of the roundelays in the same fragrant miscellany.

CHAPTER X.

Shakespear and Montaigne. Strong intellectual affinity between them. Some account of John Florio, Montaigne's English translator. Delay and difficulty in obtaining a publisher for his book. Shakespear not necessarily indebted to the English version. Parallel passages of Shakespear and Montaigne. The Florio effort a singularly poor one. Its value to English literature and sentiment. Common characteristics and bearings of the two writers. Superiority of the Englishman.

THE approach of Shakespear to the great French casuist, and the loan from him of a few ideas of an original and unusual cast, was the homage of one man of genius to another; and the obligation was incurred by the poet, when he was far more widely and favourably known in his own country than Montaigne in France or elsewhere, although the Essays had passed through three or four impressions in the course of a few years. There was no lack in England among French scholars of an acquaintance with the more prominent publications in that language, and the appearance of the posthumous edition of 1595 under the editorial care of Mlle. de Gournay at once awakened a new interest in the author and his work. On the 20th October, the same year, Edward Aggas, a stationer and himself a voluminous and experienced translator from the French, entered at Stationers' Hall under the hands of the Wardens "The Essais of Michael Lord of Mountene;" but no price was paid, apparently and indeed almost certainly, because Aggas had not the MS. in readiness, and had simply registered it to forestall competitors. He, it may be presumed, intended to carry out the undertaking himself, as he had already done a number of others; and we hear no more of the matter. Aggas did not live to accomplish his task.

Between 1595 and 1600, when another publisher, of whom I shall have a good deal to say, Edward Blount, applied to the

licensing authorities once more, there was no farther progress toward an English Montaigne, and the entry in the Register was three years old, before the long-desired book actually appeared. During those eight years such as were exceptionally interested in the class of literature had no alternative but to resort to the original; and I apprehend that among this small minority was Thomas Quiney, grandson of Adrian Quiney, a mercer of Stratford, and son of that particular friend of the poet, Richard Quiney. These Quineys, who were mercers and vintners, and had relations with London, if not with the wine-growing provinces of France, notably Bordeaux itself, where the *Essays* first saw the light, were persons of exceptional culture, and Thomas, who subsequently espoused Judith Shakespear, was a most likely man to invest in one of the earlier Bordeaux editions of the *Essays* on their first appearance. These contained Books First and Second only; and to those portions the indebtedness of the poet seems to be restricted. Moreover, it is observable, that in the passages, which he has employed, that in the *Tempest* inclusive, Shakespear reproduces the substance of his original, rather than the text, as if the general idea had fixed itself in his mind, and he wrote from recollection, not with the volume before him—recollection, that is to say, of what Quiney had read and explained to him.

In the presence of a copy of the Florio version once probably or possibly belonging to him, and of the fact, that it was in type soon enough to serve for reference in the case, at all events, of *Measure for Measure* and the *Tempest*, it would be futile to contend, that the dramatist did not open its leaves, and refresh his impressions. But I adduce the foregoing testimony to shew, that he was not necessarily dependent on the translation; and the worth of that testimony would be enhanced, if it could be established beyond controversy, that the signature in the Museum copy is false.

When the English translation, after many delays, at last appeared in 1603, ten years were requisite to exhaust it; and

between the second edition in 1613 and the third (1632) nineteen years intervened. The Frenchman, in spite of all his variety, humour, and *naïveté*, was purely an author for the closet and for scholars and thinkers. His contemporary profited by the enormous advantage, which his standing as a playwright and performer in plays conferred on him. In his time, and very nearly down to the present, the English readers of Montaigne were extremely few and uncritical; and that the poet had borrowed from him here and there was almost unknown. Capell was partly aware of it.

It was natural enough that Shakespear should, with his proneness to the impounding of all matter of a convertible character, shew himself particularly alert, when his attention was directed by some accident not absolutely known to us to this singular work, in turning over the pages, perchance (as I have submitted) with Richard Quiney, and earmarking anything which struck him.

The Englishman might well acquire a peculiar sympathy with the Gascon seigneur, mainly familiar to his own countrymen as a distinguished municipal dignitary and the trusted friend of his King, from the close affinity of their intellectual bent; for throughout the more philosophical of Shakespear's writings there is the identical drift to a novel and almost paradoxical view of men and things so conspicuous in the *Essays*. It is the cue of Hamlet to turn commonplaces bottom upward, and Montaigne does the same.

The leading circumstances of the life of John Florio, his parentage, his acquaintances, and his pursuits as an author and teacher, are sufficiently familiar. He was an Italian tutor in London, as his father had been before him, and was employed in many noble families, where a proficiency in languages had become a part of the ordinary course of education, among others in those of the Earls of Pembroke and Southampton; and it is usually supposed that his wife was a sister of Samuel Daniel the poet. Whether the lady, who became Rose Florio, had been Rose Daniel, or otherwise, does not immediately concern the case

beyond the circumstance, that the alliance would tend to add one more distinguished member to the literary circle at Fulham and its vicinity about the time of Shakespear. But it is clearly relevant to bear in mind that Florio was professionally associated with two noblemen, whose names and careers are so intimately bound up with our poet; and the prior movements and whereabouts of the Italian possess a certain share of significance. In 1578 he published his *First Fruits*, and in 1579 he was a parishioner of St. Clement's Danes, where the Churchwardens' accounts for the year shew him, in common with John Fox the martyrologist, as a defaulter.* At a later date (1619) he had moved into Shoe Lane, a locality, which had been from a very remote period a fashionable and favourite quarter, and where he was able to secure the lease of a house, which he retained till his death, and by his will directed to be sold for the benefit of his estate. From his literary ventures he derived, in all likelihood, very limited benefit; his version of Montaigne seems to have been some years in hand; and both that and his *Italian Dictionary* fell into the possession of the stationer Blount, ever on the watch for bargains.

The delay in committing the English Montaigne to the press has been proposed as a very reasonable ground for conjecturing that the manuscript was seen and used by those, who enjoyed the benefit of friendly access to the translator, Shakespear among the number. But we are fortunately placed above the necessity in this case of recourse to guess-work, for there is the contemporary evidence in print of Sir William Cornwallis, that he had actually inspected portions of the version in the hands of Florio, of whose character and personal appearance he furnishes us with an edifying account;† and such a substantial piece of evidence has more than

* Folio MS. on parchment, 21 Eliz., formerly in the Phillipps collection, and most obligingly placed at my disposal by Mr. Bernard Quaritch. A William Marlowe was then residing in the parish.

† *Essays*, 1600, p. 92, quoted by Hunter, *New Illustr. of Sh.* i., 143-4. See my new edition of Montaigne, 1901, i., xl.-xli.

one kind of value and bearing, inasmuch as it not only creates the possibility or more, that Shakespear may have equally had the manuscript under his eyes, before it was published, but illustrates the habit, even of a more amateurish writer, such as Cornwallis, taking the trouble to pay a visit to Florio in the City, and examine his work. To the English essayist the analogous production of the Frenchman would be naturally of particular interest, as very few books of that kind had been so far written in this country. I indicate, however, that, so far as Shakespear himself was concerned, he had most probably had facilities for mastering salient passages and points in the First and Second Books of the *Essays* in the original language.

Perhaps there is not a more favourable illustration of the general superiority of the notions derived from foreign sources and other writers, as they offer themselves to our criticism in the pages of the English playwright, than the example in the *Merchant of Venice*, where Shakespear was ostensibly indebted to Montaigne. I transcribe below in parallel columns the two places:—

MONTAIGNE.

(Book I. Sect. 22.)

“We need not go to what is reported of the people about the cataracts of the Nile, and what philosophers believe of the music of the spheres, that the bodies of those circles being solid and smooth, and coming to touch and rub upon one another, cannot fail of creating a marvellous harmony, the changes and cadences of which cause the revolution and dances of the stars.”

SHAKESPEAR.

Merchant of Venice, v. i.

“*Lor.* See, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims:
Such harmony is in immortal souls.”

Anyone can judge for himself, how far the Englishman has left the Frenchman behind in depth and in delicacy of treatment. In the more familiar parallel passage from the *Tempest*,* there is this plainly observable, that Shakespear was no convert to

* Montaigne's Works, by Hazlitt, 1901, i., 243-4, and iv., 17.

Gonzalo's philosophy, which he merely enunciates on purpose to laugh at its empiricism, although the dramatist has sensibly paraphrased and retrenched the original language.

But well-known to excess as the passage and resemblance may be, I shall now give side by side the original French, Florio's English version, and Shakespear's loose transmutation, partly by way of exhibiting the method of Florio :—

MONTAIGNE.
(Original French)
Ils[LycurgusandPlato]
n'ont peu imaginer vne
naifueté si pure & simple,
comme nous la voyons
par experience: ny n'ont
peu croire que nostre
societé se peust maintenir
avec si peu d'artifice, &
de fondeure humaine.
C'est vne nation, diroy-ie
à Platon, en laquelle il n'y
a aucune espece de tra-
fique; nulle cognoissance
de lettres; nulle science
de nombres; nul nom de
magistrat, ny de superi-
orité politique; nul vsage
de seruice, de richesse, ou
de pauvreté; nuls con-
trats; nulles successions;
nuls partages; nulles oc-
cupations qu'oysies; nul
respect de parenté, que
commun; nuls veste-
mens; nulle agriculture;
nul metal; nul vsage de
vin ou de bled. Les pa-
roles mesmes, qui signi-
fient la mensonge, la tra-
hison, la dissimulation,
l'auarice, l'enuie, la de-

FLORIO.
“They could not ima-
gine a genuitie so pure
and simple, as we see it
by experience, nor ever
beleeve our societie might
be maintained with so
little arte and humane
combination. It is a
nation, would I answere
Plato, that hath no kinde
of traffike, no knowledge
of letters, no intelligence
of numbers, no name of
magistrate, nor of politike
superioritie; no vse of
service, of riches, or of
poverty; no contracts,
no successions, no di-
vidences, no occupation but
idle; no respect of kin-
red, but common; no
apparrell but naturall, no
manuring of lands, no vse
of wine, corne, or mettle.
The very words that
import lying, falsehood,
treason, dissimulation, co-
vetousness, envie, detrac-
tion, and pardon, were
never heard of amongst
them. How dissonant
would hee finde his imagi-

SHAKESPEAR.
(Act ii. Sc. 1)
Gon. I' the common-
wealth I would by
contraries
Execute all things; for
no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no
name of magistrate;
Letters should not be
known; riches, po-
verty,
And use of service, none;
contract, succession.
Bourn, bound of land,
tith, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or
wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men
idle, all;
And women too, but
innocent and pure;
No sovereignty—. . .
All things in common
nature should produce
Without sweat or endea-
vour: treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun,
or need of any engine,
Would I not have; but na-
ture should bring forth,
Of its own kind, all
foison, all abundance,

traction, le pardon, in-
ouyes. Combien trou-
ueroit il la republique
qu'il a imaginée, esloignée
de cette perfection ?

*Hos natura modos prima
dedit.*

Ou demeurant, ils vivent
en vne contrée de païs
tres-plaisante, & bien tem-
perée : de façon qu'à ce
que m'ont dit mes tes-
moigns, il est rare d'y
voir, vn homme malade ;
& m'ont assuré, n'en y
auoir veu aucun trem-
blant, chassieux, edenté,
ou courbé de vieillesse."

nary commonwealth from
this perfection ?

*Hos natura modos primum
dedit.*

Nature at first vprise,
These manners did devise.
Furthermore, they live
in a country of so exceed-
ing pleasant and tempe-
rate situation, that as my
testimonies have tolde me
it is very rare to see a
sicke body amongst them ;
and they have further as-
sured me, they never saw
any man there, shaking
with the palsie, tooth-
lesse, with eyes drooping,
or crooked and stooping
through age."

To feed my innocent
people.

The version by Florio was long the sole ordinary medium, through which a conversance with the book was possible for anyone not an exceptionally advanced French scholar. But that it is a deplorably bad one there cannot be any doubt in the mind of all, who have mastered the original, and take the trouble to check even here and there the Italian preceptor's ludicrous mis-renderings, somewhat aggravated by his puerile attempts to give English metrical equivalents for the classical and other foreign quotations. Florio cannot surely have understood the language, which he professed to interpret. His undertaking to-day is almost worthless. Different was the case, when it saw the light. It tended to promote the moral and political influence of Montaigne in England, and to enrich our literature with fresh ideas and suggestions. Its literal fidelity or otherwise could not stand in the way of that.

Montaigne differed from his English contemporary, inasmuch as he delivered his views, where they were his own, or referred to

himself, direct—without an intermediary; he was not only his own analyst, but largely his own biographer. But our poet, except in those passages of the *Sonnets*, where we imagine that we detect allusions to his own actual feelings and experiences, reached the ear and eye of the world through the sole channel, which was open to him—such of his persons of the play as could with fair propriety be charged with carrying the message. The genius of the author is answerable in the present instance most notably for the illusion, that the characters of his creation are flesh and blood; and this, so to speak, fallacy throws us at first off our guard, till we have taken time to realize the true facts. All the figures, which move on and off the stage in these dramas were as completely under the subjection of the poet as Ariel was under that of a not greater magician, Prospero; and I am most emphatically for the enlistment in the service of the biographer of the not, after all, very numerous places, where Shakespear interposes his individuality in the only way, in which he was able, or chose, to do so. I set down these lines with the passages in *Hamlet* (iii. 1) and *Measure for Measure* (iii. 1) before me, side by side with the remarks, which Montaigne has left behind him on the same subject—that of Death; and a collation seems to favour the idea, that the repugnance to the inevitable end was far keener in the Englishman at thirty-eight than in the Frenchman at forty-seven or so, and that the former, under some circumstances of personal unhappiness, to which the exact key is deficient, was dissuaded from suicide by the uncertainty of future punishments and rewards.

Several places in the First and Second Books of the *Essays* of Montaigne have been pointed out, as more than probable sources of Shakespearian inspiration. The least known one may be that in the *Apology of Raimond de Sebonde*,* where there is a striking illustration of the passage in *Hamlet*, iv., 3, where the prince is interrogated as to Polonius:—

“*King*.—Now, Hamlet, where is Polonius?—”

* Book II., c. xii. Hazlitt's ed. 1901, ii., 294.

In the Essay we read: "lice are sufficient to vacate Sylla's dictatorship; and the life and heart of a great and triumphant emperor is the breakfast of a little worm." This class of speculation is a common favourite with these two illustrious thinkers.

The community of sentiment, where death and suicide are discussed in *Measure for Measure*, is too remarkable to permit us to presume an accidental coincidence. The twofold topic is handled in the *Sonnets*; and possibly the stanzas, where the writer touches this painful theme, are referrible to the same epoch and frame of mind, when Shakespear was alone in the metropolis, and had been bereaved of his only son, who died in 1596.

A very remarkable affinity of sentiment between these two great personages, although it lies in a matter of secondary consequence, is distinguishable in that common distaste, implied in the English writer, but expressed in the French one, for ostentatious and fulsome forefronts, from which there was a curious revolt just about the time of Shakespear, he himself being a conspicuous member of the minority. This point I touch elsewhere; but it seemed well to add it to the other similitudes, which have been adduced, more especially as it so much more partakes of the nature of an independent coincidence. Than the title-pages, which came, as I presume, direct from the hand of our poet, nothing can well be more succinct, nor were the epistles to Lord Southampton much less so. The latter were special personal exigencies, just as Montaigne thought fit to mention that he was a chevalier and a gentleman of his majesty's chamber. Even these particulars, if it had been put to him, he might have admitted to be surplusage. Yet he pleads, rather for others perhaps than for himself, that such titles of distinction, however numerous, having been acquired at considerable outlay, were not to be disregarded without offence; and then he winds up the paper by observing:—"Je trouue pareillement de mauuaise grace d'en charger le front & inscription des liures, que nous faisons imprimer;" which I apprehend to be exactly what Shakespear felt. I may have occasion to touch this point again.

When one places two contemporary writers, such as Montaigne and Shakespear, before one in one's mind's eye, side by side, one sees that in either case the main strength lay in the presentment of common notions and feelings in new and striking points of view. The author of the *Essays* did not set himself to tell us what he thought so much as what he felt, what instincts, motives, and passions swayed him, and this task he carried out, as he promised in his exordium, only too fully and candidly. Of course, no writer ever, before or since, spared himself so little, and so entirely admitted to his inmost confidence the world for all time. His confessions have been accepted with some allowance for humour and hyperbole, and some for their very frankness. The English dramatist and poet was differently situated in almost every respect from a man, whom he broadly resembled in the possession of a genius emphatically original. Shakespear has made autobiographical disclosures; but he used as his vehicle, instead of a book of prose theses more or less calculated for the closet of the scholar, the sonnet and the play; and in the latter he enjoyed the opportunity and advantage (if it was an advantage) of choosing spokesmen whose enunciations to the majority of hearers and readers conveyed no hidden sense, only too pregnant as they were with significance to the author and, may-be, a few others.

The profundity and delicacy of perception, so manifest in the Englishman, are far less conspicuous in the Essayist; but each excelled in his way in startling his admirers by fresh glosses on familiar truths and whimsical, even paradoxical, inversions of accepted opinions; and a vindication of this criticism may be said to lie in the passages, where it is shown that our poet saw his account in conveying usable points from what was then a work still under probation and still imperfectly understood even in France. Had Montaigne had under his eyes the English plays, especially those of higher reach, he would have been the first to adopt any suggestion, which happened to impress him. But he died a year before *Venus and Adonis* appeared.

CHAPTER XI.

The Lyrics of 1593-4. Conditions, which favoured their successive appearance. Venus and Adonis specially licensed by the Primate. Peculiar feature about the two books. Significance of the motto on the title of the Venus and Adonis. Was Lucrece written in a London suburb? The plague of 1593. Coeval notices of the Poems. The Passionate Pilgrim. Shakespear's earliest critics. Verses before the second issue of Florio's Montaigne ascribable to Shakespear. The verses before Florio's Second Fruits probably not Shakespear's.

THE Works are not only classifiable into dramatic and non-dramatic, but the latter may be again divided into two almost distinct types and sections: 1. the two early lyrical Poems with the few occasional pieces contributed to miscellanies or at any rate comprised in them, and the Sonnets; and 2. the Songs incorporated with the Plays. A very brief comparative study of the two groups should suffice to satisfy any one, that in the latter lay the main strength of the writer outside the drama; and while these delightful and matchless productions are unequal, some of the happiest and most excellent occur in the earliest plays, some of the least so in those of the maturest period; yet, on the whole, they immeasurably surpass the *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and *Sonnets*; and the author may have shared the indifference to those other efforts evinced and expressed by so many modern critics, and have remained a passive and neutral spectator of the ambiguous proceeding of Thorpe in 1609.

I am personally in favour of the notion of Charles Knight, whose Shakespearian researches were necessarily imperfect and faulty from the dearth of information in his day, so far as the commencement of the acquaintance between the poet and his first patron is concerned; and it occurs to me as highly probable and reasonable that the introduction was, perhaps fortuitously, effected through the alliance by marriage of the young Earl with Sir

Thomas Heneage, Vice-Chamberlain of the Household, an official bound in the ordinary exercise of his public duties to come into contact with the theatres, and, as we now know from a recently discovered MS., himself a poet, who would be apt to sympathize with a young and new writer. Many things are far more fanciful than that Shakespear made it known, when he saw an opportunity, that he had by him the manuscript of *Venus and Adonis*, and that his noble young friend was not displeased at the idea of being conspicuously associated with the essay, when it assumed a printed shape.

Whatever may have been the precise origin of the first production of this poem, there is little doubt that a contributory agency to the prompt succession of the *Lucrece* was the enforced suspension of theatrical performances owing to the plague of 1593. *Venus and Adonis* was licensed on the 18th April, 1593, and *Lucrece* on the 9th May, 1594. Both poems were inscribed to the youthful Southampton, and were calculated to be agreeable to his taste and flattering to his vanity. Yet a much more remarkable feature in the presentation to the world of the former book must strike us from one point of view as having been its enrolment on the Stationers' Register under the special authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the same Dr. Whitgift, who subsequently grew less tolerant, and closed the register against Hall's *Satires*, Marlowe's *Ovid*, Cutwode's *Bumble Bee*, and other questionable articles, with which Shakespear's volume might have been not improperly bracketed. Perhaps the noble lord, whose name was attached to the dedication, had something to do with the indulgence, and Field the publisher might well be reassured by the hand of the Primate to the entry.

A point of view, which must not be neglected in endeavouring to illustrate the personal character of the poet, is the taste and self-command, which he shews in the introduction of his works, where it is to be presumed, that he had the opportunity of exercising a direct control. Look at the two earliest products—the *Venus*

and *Adonis* and *Lucrece* in the facsimiles by Ashbee or Griggs—at the forefronts and the preliminary epistles, and note, how succinct both alike are, how much to the purpose, and how dissimilar from the florid and diffuse style then usually prevalent! If Shakespear in his *Sonnets* had the *Affectionate Shepherd* of Barnfield in view, the latter writer seems to have admired and copied the impressive brevity of the title to *Venus and Adonis*, as exempt from book-seller's garnish as the noble epistle to Lord Southampton is exempt from cliental adulation and servility. The fashion was, it must be said, not Elizabethan or Shakespearian in its origin, for we occasionally meet throughout the sixteenth century, when regular title-pages had come into general vogue, with similar frugality of taste or similar reticence; and, rather curiously, in a book which the poet almost certainly held in his hand—the *Hundred Merry Tales*—this peculiarity is signally conspicuous. It meets the eye again in the quarto edition of *England's Helicon*, 1600, a volume probably superintended by Anthony Babington of Warrington, and by the way, not without an equivocal preface of its own; and the *Sonnets* themselves, as I remark elsewhere, almost betray the same influence.

The two addresses to Lord Southampton in two successive years exhaust the recourse of the poet to such a kind of auxiliary tribute and homage. How many farther opportunities he had of linking noble and influential names with his own we know well enough, and we equally know that he never did so.

It is observable that the terse, epigrammatic form was not limited to the lyrics. It extends to the denominations of the plays, as represented on the stage (not as separately printed), wherever we may conclude that the author had a ruling voice. Whatever might be his solicitude to attain a successful reception of his dramas at the theatres, we must acquit him of the disposition to fall into the booksellers' foible of appetizing forefronts—quite an epidemic in his early days, and extending to all classes of literature.

Taken in connection with the complaint in the *Sonnets* that the name of the writer had contracted a brand from occupation forced on him, presumably that of an actor, the quotation on the title-page of *Venus and Adonis* :—

“ *Vilia miretur vulgus ; mihi flavus Apollo
Pocula Castaliâ plena ministret aquâ—*”

may appear to receive an unexpected illustration, as the *Vilia* of the couplet possibly implies unworthy employments for a season discarded, while the despised and discredited performer on the boards of other men’s plays assumed his true rank among the disciples of the Muses under the most auspicious patronage. It was a brief interval, during which theatrical exhibitions were discontinued in London ; and he proceeded bard and sonneteer.

I have pointed to *England’s Helicon*, 1600, as somewhat cognate in its forefront and introduction to other Shakespearian books ; but the most curious feature in it is the quotation on the title-page :—

“ *Casta placent superis,
Purâ cum veste venite,
Et manibus puris
Sumite fontis aquam.*”

Which sends us back to the *Vilia miretur vulgus* of 1593. The poet was a contributor to the miscellany. Did he suggest the motto ; albeit he had long resumed his theatrical operations, they were not so irksome in 1600 as they might have been at the anterior date.

Impartially speaking, it is fortunate for his reputation, that this was no more than a temporary exigency and relief. Looking at the maiden publication itself, one distinguishes occasional passages, which seem to prognosticate higher possibilities ; but the *Lucrece* is decidedly inferior in every way ; its preparation was arguably more rapid. In the description of the horse in the 1593 volume, regarding the nature of the details, we are probably bound to

recognise, rather than early Shoreditch recollections, yet earlier Stratford ones.

There is a slender quarto volume in the Bodleian Library, which is entitled to an unique place in our early poetical records. It preserves within its covers the sole surviving copy of the *editio princeps* of *Venus and Adonis*, 1593, and a second work, nearly equal in rarity, if not in fame, Giles Fletcher's *Licia*. A singular history, of which we are not admitted to the commencement, is attached to the book. It forms No. 396 of "A Catalogue of a Curious and Valuable Collection of Books, which are now Selling (for Ready Money) at the Prices affixed to each Article; By William Ford, No. 14 Cromford Court, Manchester, MDCCCV." Ford's interleaved copy is before me, with his MSS. notes, relative to the buyers and prices. Although the items are said to be purchaseable at the figures attached, no figures appear against lots 395-6; and against the latter we find written by the owner: "£25. o. o. Mr. Malone." The precious relic, which comes second in order, is described as "original edition, elegantly bound in Russia, gilt leaves, extraordinary rare;" and nothing is said of its antecedents. Malone hesitated to pay the amount asked, which was presumably higher, for Ford tells us that "£25 was the sum I at last obtained;" and he properly adds that, as the *Licia* went with it, the Shakespear really cost only about £10.* Bindley the collector, who evidently saw the book, recommended Ford to put it up to auction, and considered that it would have brought as much as one hundred guineas. Heber was on the ground, and ran Malone close, for there was a stipulation that the latter should surrender the *Licia* to his competitor; which, as the volume is in its original state—in its Manchester livery—at the present moment, was never carried out.

I have stated that Ford does not assist us in tracing back the *Venus and Adonis* to any anterior proprietor; but a collateral cir-

* Yet at the Voigt Sale in 1806 Malone gave over £40 for a tract by George Whetstone.

cumstance enables me to offer an elucidation, which I regard as extremely plausible. During the years 1804-5, Mr. Thomas Lister Parker, of Browsholme Hall, West Riding of Yorkshire, was effecting extensive alterations in his residence. He was a young man of four and twenty, and may have taken no very considerable interest in early English literature, of which the library possessed a valuable collection. While he was engaged, however, in carrying out repairs and improvements, it seems to have occurred to him, that the aspect of the books was not very handsome or ornamental, and as he had engaged the services of other experts from a distance for other departments, he called in Ford to put the books in order, and where it was necessary, rebind them.* The owner was presumably more intent on rural employments and pursuits than on literary dilettantism, and the less important items by no means improbably passed into the hands of Ford, more especially as in 1810 four Caxtons were sold to Lord Spencer, Mr. Grenville, and Mr. Towneley for 165 guineas.

It is distinctly asserted by Mr. Heber, in a note printed in the *Bibliotheca Heberiana*,† that Mr. Parker, his personal friend, had this transaction with the Manchester dealer, and he also speaks of certain of the items having been shorn by the rebinder of some of their original amplitude of margin. But it strikes me that we do not get here the precise facts or true chronological sequence, and that between the summons of Ford to Browsholme—I say, in 1804-5, when the structural and other embellishments were in progress, and the premises were ostensibly in a state of disorder—and the sale of the Caxtons a sensible interval elapsed,—Ford being allowed to acquire the *Venus and Adonis* and a few other prizes in 1804 or the following year under the category of unbound sun-

* See Account of Browsholme Hall, 1815, printed anonymously, but attributed to Mr. Parker himself. He furnishes no information about Ford, which comes from Mr. Heber's memorandum attached to a copy of Gascoigne's *Poesies*, 1575, now in the Bodleian.

† Confessions of a Collector, 1897, p. 25.

dries, in which Mr. Parker, from his youth and inexperience, recognised no importance. The Caxtons appear to have been purchased direct from the owner without an intermediary, the fame of the library having been spread by the Manchester catalogue, and the indifference of Mr. Parker rendering the negotiation perfectly feasible. At the later point of time, there is no vestige or suggestion of Ford or of any operation outside the private disposal of the four books in question. The account of Browsholme Hall alludes in 1815 to the ancient library of the hereditary bow-bearers of Bowland Forest under the Dukes of Buccleuch as a thing of the past, and specifies only a MS. on vellum, of which the history is not given, and the Caxtons, of which the history has been related. Beyond the Shakespear and a few other rarities there is not actually much in the 1805 catalogue of superlative moment; and it was perhaps the best haul, which Ford ever obtained. Among the purchasers was Mr. Gifford, who bought a large lot of the original editions of Shirley, even now sufficiently common; but Mr. Heber secured many rare *desiderata*, and Mr. Malone carried off the *spolia opima* in the *Venus and Adonis* and *Licia*, which, being among the articles in need of new liveries, and being cognate in subject and contemporary in date, were re clothed together in russia, as we now see them in the Bodleian. If my view be correct, they were bought by the Parkers at the time of publication.

A detail, which is far indeed from lacking significance, but which is of course independent of the question of provenance, is that in 1805 Ford, apparently a man of no mean intelligence, and fully aware of the immense rarity of the Shakespear piece, either found it bound up with the *Licia*, precedence being given to the latter, or (which is far more likely) himself united them with the same priority, and that his relative estimation of the two was very nearly balanced, whereas at the present moment £50 or so might secure a copy of *Licia*, and one of *Venus and Adonis* would leave £2000 behind it. Ninety-six years since, not merely was it

unsurmised, that no duplicate—not even an imperfect one—of the Shakespear was to occur, but it was probably unknown, that no other record of the survival of the book existed, and the distance between the author and his contemporary—all his contemporaries—had yet to be realized. Ford deemed the Fletcher rare and the other “extraordinary rare”; yet, curiously enough again, he appraised the former higher than the latter; and in the same catalogue Lodge’s *Phillis*, 1593, is valued on a similar principle at £10. 10s.

The extremely legitimate hypothesis that special conditions of the nature suggested accelerated the appearance of *Lucrece* may be allowed to carry with it the inference, that that poem was composed in the country, that the author escaped from the danger of contagion by leaving London, not necessarily to go into Warwickshire, but to seek quarters for the time in some spot, where he could work without interruption. The detached hamlets, which were then separated even from the western side of the town itself by wide stretches of open country, afforded ready accommodation, and it would be interesting to learn, whether the poet bent his steps toward that group of suburban centres, where we already know that some of his personal friends, at least very soon after 1593, foregathered—Fulham and its environs.

The same visitation, which is credited with having afforded Shakespear a respite from theatrical pursuits in the metropolis, enabling him to carry out his literary work, and complete it for the press, led Edward Alleyne to make a provincial tour with his company in the Eastern counties. But there is no evidence that the poet and his fellows took a similar step; there is no local colouring in *Lucrece* to assist us. Shakespear, having ingratiated himself with Lord Southampton by the graceful and dutiful tribute before *Venus and Adonis*, might be naturally anxious to improve his standing with that popular and wealthy young nobleman, and accordingly made *Lucrece* follow closely behind with a second and somewhat more confident address to the same person-

age. As a dramatist and actor, the poet could not fail to perceive the valuable assistance calculated to accrue from friendly goodwill in such a quarter under many possible contingencies.

The innumerable citations of Francis Meres as a witness to the celebrity and appreciation of Shakespear in 1598, in his otherwise not very readable volume called *Wit's Treasury*, printed in that year, and the marginal reference of William Clarke, in his *Polimanteia*, 1595, to the Poems, then newly published, have this feature in common, that both were of academical origin; and it is perhaps not generally recognized, that in the first quarto of *Hamlet*, 1603, that play is said to have been performed not only in London, but at Oxford and Cambridge. Although, however, Meres was a member of both universities, he seems to have been resident in London in or about 1598; for he dates his *God's Arithmetic*, 1597, from his chamber in St. Mary Botolph Lane; and he had relatives of good position in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Meres was by no means improbably a spectator at the performance of some of the plays, which he enumerates, and a reader of the Poems, if not of the "sugared" sonnets in MS. For he was evidently a student, who included all the most recent publications in his range, and he specifies all the most eminent verse-writers of the day. It is little better than a string of names, except that he tells us that Spenser "excelleth in all things," and that Anthony Munday is "the best plotter." He bestows a few lines on Shakespear, and he classes him with those, who are "the most passionate among us to bewail and bemoan the perplexities of love." The author of *Polimanteia* describes [*Venus and*] *Adonis* as "Watson's heir," which is surely debateable. Whatever may be the merit of Watson, his mind and that of Shakespear were cast in different moulds. It is to be suspected that in his Sonnets published between 1581 and 1593 Watson attained the height of his intellectual possibility in any direction.

There is no reliable information on the circumstances, under which poems by Shakespear were inserted, in company with

some by other pens, in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1599, by the unscrupulous stationer Jaggard. It was a small heterogeneous miscellany formed somewhat at random, and two of the Shakespearian pieces had appeared the year before in the earliest known impression of *Love's Labor's Lost*, but with variations, as from a different MS. source. One feature in the book is that it purported to be on sale by the same William Leake, whose name is similarly attached to the *Venus and Adonis* of 1593 and 1594, and to the *Lucrece* of 1594, and that when it reappeared in 1612 with additions, it is said simply to be printed, not for, but by Jaggard, who, we note, places the supplementary matter below the name of Shakespear, so that it might be taken to be his or otherwise. The peculiar association of the poet was not with Leake, but with Field, the Stratford man, who put the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* in type, and of whom we lose sight after 1596. Nor do we know whether the writer himself furnished to the volume by Chester, called *Love's Martyr, or Rosalin's Complaint*, 1601, the verses there found, or whether they were obtained through an indirect channel. It was, so far as we can judge, no part of Shakespear's plan to associate himself and his work with others, and that, too, at a period when joint authorship was quite a fashion. He constituted in his own person a type, of which he was the sole example.

But there are some lines attached to a volume, which was printed (for the second time) in 1613, which have no actual signature, but impress me with the feeling that they can have proceeded only from one pen. They are not in the first edition. I allude to the tribute prefixed to Florio's Montaigne. This panegyric, which certainly far excels in merit the passage in the *Merry Wives* elsewhere mentioned, is as follows:—

Concerning the honor of bookes.

Since Honor from the Honorer proceeds.
How well do they deserve that memorie
And leave in bookes for all posterities

The names of worthyes, and their vertuous deedes
 When all their glorie els, like water weedes
 Without their element, presently dyes,
 And all their greatnes quite forgotten lyes :
 And when, and how they florisht no man heedes
 How poore remembrances are statutes toomes
 And other monuments that men erect
 To Princes, which remaine in closed roomes
 Where but a few behold them ; in respect
 Of Bookes, that to the vniversall eye
 Shew how they liu'd, the other where they lye.

The offering, which was not necessarily the result of an appeal from Florio and was possibly obtained by the energetic and ubiquitous Blount, publisher of the book, may have been an afterthought and an insertion at the last moment. It follows a long copy of verses by Daniel of very inferior quality, and although by a more careful distribution of space the difficulty might have been obviated, it is so cramped at the foot of the page, that no room remained for a subscription, if any was furnished or intended. The want of particular application, as well as the typographical peculiarity, may have something to do with the residence of the poet at Stratford at this juncture; and the lines would be the latest, which came from his pen, assuming them to be his. They look back on all that he had accomplished toward the elevation of the book and its maker.

It has always seemed to me that in the verses just quoted, which have (singularly enough) no specific bearing on the immediate subject-matter, and constitute a general homage to books, there is an unmistakeable individuality absent from all other compositions of a similar stamp within my acquaintance. They breathe the air of a novice in the art of complimentary trifling, and display a sort of self-restraint due to the fear of going too far or saying too much. If the lines are really his, he seldom enough cast his thoughts in so contracted a mould. The singularity of the pointing, or want of it, strictly follows the original before me.

We all know that Shakespear has left in some of his plays

explicit evidence of his perusal of Montaigne,* and that he has transplanted into his own pages sentiments, of which the value and interest in his eyes perhaps induced him on its reappearance ten years later to honour the book in this unparalleled way.

It is within my knowledge that in 1591 lines attached to Florio's *Second Fruits*, headed "Phaëton to his friend Florio," have been almost accepted as from the same hand, and I quite subscribe to the internal marks of resemblance to those accompanying the Montaigne, which may be another mode of casting a doubt on the latter, since I feel very strongly, that the prior tribute, though not too early for an acquaintance between the two men, is too early for a composition of the kind by Shakespear—is in fact better than anything undramatic which he is likely to have written in 1591; nor is the superscription characteristic. The verses before the Montaigne are pensive and concise, as they are headless and tailless—in short, anonymous. They read like the written thought of one, who was not in midcareer, in the heyday of life and activity, but who had reached the summit, and had a large retrospect.

On the contrary, a drama entitled *Phaëton* was written by Thomas Decker, and acted by the Lord Admiral's men in 1597-8, perhaps at the Rose theatre†; and I offer the suggestion that the author may have not inaptly adopted the name of the hero of his play in addressing a copy of verses to Florio, unless it was too early for Decker, whose first publication is dated 1598. *Phaëton*, however, is not specified as a new piece in that year; and Decker was working for the theatre at all events in 1594, when he completed his *Diocletian*. The mythological tale of *Phaëton* was not unlikely to have been simmering in the brain of Decker, then a young man, before he reduced it to form; and he may have made it the subject of conversation, till he dubbed himself or was

* Particularly in the *Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*, and the *Tempest*.

† Hazlitt's *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, p. 221.

familiarly dubbed by the name of his proposed hero, as Drayton is said to have borne among his intimates the *sobriquet* of Rowland, borrowed from the title to his *Idea*, 1593.

The poet was not to be coaxed or shamed into joining the vociferous phalanx, which wept over the last of the Tudors, and tendered its congratulations to the incoming Stuart, even by the example of his cousin Greene, who penned an ephemeral panegyric upon the notable occasion, *A Poet's Vision and a Prince's Glory*, of which we should have been entertained by Shakespear's private estimate and valuation. But here was a rebuke to him for his lukewarm enthusiasm at Stratford itself—at his very door, as it were; and in truth, whether he found himself in town or country at that particular juncture, he was apt to be equally twitted with his disloyal indifference.

CHAPTER XII.

Shakespear's Sonnets considered. Their chronology. Their sequence. Crudity of their style. The dedication to Mr. William Hammond, under his initials, by Thorpe the finder and publisher. Impossibility of the Pembroke theory. Points in evidence and disproof. Analogous inscriptions. Enigmas in fashion in 1609. Vindication of Thorpe. One of the earliest appreciators of the Poet. A MS. of Middleton's Game of Chess dedicated to W. Hammond. The dedicatee presumed to be of the family of Hammond of St. Alban's Court, Nonnington, Kent. That county shown to be in and before 1609 an unique literary centre. List of families residing there and their friends, Marlowe, Chapman, &c. Source of the MSS. of Marlowe's Hero and Leander and Lucan. Association of Thorpe and of Edward Blount with this Kentish circle. Also of John Manningham of the Middle Temple, the Diarist. Earliest known collector of first quartos of Shakespear in the same neighbourhood. Chapman and the Walsinghams of Chislehurst. Careers of Thorpe and Blount traced. Both experts in trouvailles. Blount undertakes the publication of Florio's Montaigne, after it had lain by some time. The version registered in 1595 not Florio's.

THE Sonnet and the Eclogue have ever been the two types of literary product, over the meaning and moral of which the writers of all ages seem to have thought fit to cast a veil of mystery and contradiction, and to create an inexhaustible field of controversy. The proverb says: "He that has been in the oven himself, knows where to find the pasty," and practical conversance, even if it be at a much humbler level, with the methods of preparation or evolution is masterfully helpful in shedding light on such a body of material as the Sonnets of Shakespear. Both the classes of composition above specified peculiarly lend themselves to hyperbole and fantastic or passionate extravagance. We peruse with interest the Virgilian Bucolics, thoroughly aware of the prevailing vein, and accepting with reserve the political and personal sentiments of the bard, as they are conveyed to us through the interlocutors;

and it was in the year immediately succeeding the publication of *Venus and Adonis* here in England, that a young Staffordshire man, Richard Barnfield, produced avowedly on the model of the second eclogue of Virgil a very poor and unreadable poem entitled the *Affectionate Shepherd*. The Latin original strikes us, even with a knowledge of Roman manners, as preposterous enough; its English analogue is only not repugnant, because it is ridiculous. But my allusion to these works was actuated by the desire and necessity of shewing, how far they partake in common of the structural characteristic and weakness of a fabric disproportionate to its base or of a literary fancy, or even biographical incident, overlaid under the Author's hand by an afterbirth of casually developed conceits.

The Sonnets have constituted during the greater part of a century backward from the existing time—not from the date of their appearance—such a fruitful and favourite theme for speculation and comment that, as the saying goes, to propound anything fresh upon them and their character, would itself be a kind of art. Yet it may prove by no means impossible to accomplish something even in that direction. The origin, succession, and inner meaning of these productions have of recent years formed a sort of cult. The fame of the author as a playwright has united with the obscurity of his personal history to invest them with an importance, which their literary merit surely does not justify; and one proof of such a view may be allowed to lie in the circumstance, that the school of critics and biographers, which preceded the elevation of the Sonnets to this new and higher rank, did not even disguise its qualified estimate of their intrinsic value.

The usual idea about the chronology of the Sonnets is that they were written after 1594 and prior to 1598, when they are said by Francis Meres to be extant in a manuscript form or rather as separate papers, and to be in the possession of friends—of those, it is fairly presumable, to whom they had been given, or for whom they had been designed. But as a line from one of them is

common to a play, which was printed in 1596 (*Edward III.*), it might seem, that a portion of the series was then completed, nor is there any proof that all were in existence in 1598, when in the printed copy of *Love's Labor's Lost* two, if not three, evidently part of the gradual accumulation, made their appearance as part of the text. On the contrary, they are precisely that kind of literary composition, which a poet would commit to paper from time to time, as the humour took him, or as he perceived the possibility of strengthening a passage or pursuing an imagery; and the acquaintance of Meres with them was ostensibly slight. He refers to them as *sugared*. A worse epithet could hardly have been chosen. They are certainly impassioned and amatory; but they are also philosophical, misanthropic, bitter, sad, and weak.

A perusal of the dull and tedious poetical effusions given to the world during the Elizabethan era under this name leads a practical investigator to the unchangeable view, that there is no dependence on the authenticity of the sentiment or the homogeneous truth of the narrative. A large allowance has to be made for all those wilful and wanton artifices of composition and phraseology, which seem to be proper to this kind of work, and for all the capricious humours, of which the source and sense are apt to be latent in the mind of the writer, and to be lost with him, where he was led by temperament or other cause to maintain reserve concerning his literary methods.

Inferentially the loose papers, of which Meres speaks in 1598 as distributed among Shakespear's friends, were collected together by or for Thomas Thorpe, who was a person of superior intelligence and insight, and given to the printer in the order in which they present themselves in the 4^o of 1609. No one, I believe, has ever beheld a duplicate of them, or any of them, in MS. within memory or even within tradition. The careless treatment of such things by the average Englishman almost warrants a belief in the possibility, that the copy was not received by the Editor (Thorpe), after it had passed through numerous

hands, in a very intelligible state, and that he found it necessary to supply *lacunæ* arising from damage to the slips of paper, on which the series of stanzas was written, before he delivered the matter to the typographer George Eld or the publisher John Wright. Or, as an alternative, we may speculate, whether Thorpe did not judge it desirable to have the whole transcribed for Press; and in either case we seem here to have the explanation of certain words and sentences, which do not strike us as genuine Shakespearian utterances, even supposing them to be anterior to the issue of *Palladis Tamia*. The man, who could have set Thorpe right, was at that juncture, if, as is usually held, Shakespear was in London in 1609, within easy reach; but—and here is a farther noteworthy point—it was assuredly familiar enough to “the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth,” that, had he approached the person most directly interested, he would have found him wholly indifferent to the matter, if not absolutely indisposed to assent to the measure.

Whatever is capable of being thought and urged against their biographical eloquence, it is not to be gainsaid that here we are confronted with a solid body of authentic material evolving from an intellect of a more than usually sound and practical order, and, if they do not fundamentally reflect the personal and private sentiments of the author, ostensibly raising and warranting the inquiry, what do they mean? It is not that they can be alleged to be free from exaggeration; but after all possible allowances have we not a germ of realism respondent to a riper and finer one in the dramas, each seeming to substantiate the other, common exponents of a domestic epic more melancholy than sublime.

The direct and personal element in certain writers is so clear as to be unchallenged. A vein of obvious egoism pervades all their work, and the nature of the subject permitted and suggested the treatment. But we have to bear in mind that this is apt to be an inherent tendency in all authors, and that generalization and selection are the result of training and self-constraint; and that even a

dramatic author, much less a sonneteer, should deliver to the world neutral utterances without some private disclosures, is to ascribe to him a larger measure of heroic forbearance than he is likely to possess. Such touches in Shakespear as one suspects of having a bearing on himself are assuredly couched in terms apter to strike us than those, in whose sight and hearing, as it were, they were penned.

When we come to the *Dedication* to one individual—that individual a man—we see that there was, first, the Virgilian and, secondly and perhaps immediately, the Barnfield, precedent—Barnfield, a provincial contemporary of Shakespear, a graduate of Oxford, and a youth of twenty. The *Sonnets* of the Warwickshire poet were doubtless composed at intervals, under different impulses, at various levels of mood and temperament. There are a few notes of time and neighbourhood; here and there are touches, which bespeak happier inspiration or later workmanship; while of the literary history of the *Affectionate Shepherd* we know nothing more than is vouchsafed on the face of the pamphlet, which contains it. Yet this superficial material so far helps us, that it corroborates the widely different notions of those days, when a young poet takes up an equivocal theme, and inscribes it in familiar terms to a noble lady. But there is this vital difference, that, whereas in the case of Barnfield, the treatment is a mere vague and pointless youthful imitation of a classical prototype, the *Sonnets* embody a direct appeal from the immediate writer to another person of the same sex, impersonating a woman, making way for a woman to speak, and even referring to a marriage consummated by the suitor with someone else.

It is almost due to Shakespear to accentuate the fact, that he had no proved hand in sending his *Sonnets* to the press. The *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* owed their publication to his personal agency, and were entrusted to the care of his fellow-townsmen, Richard Field. In 1609 he was, so far as we know, in the metropolis, and within access of the publisher Thorpe: the

latter does not only not suggest that he acted with the author's cognizance, but subscribes with his own initials the fantastically worded dedication to Mr. W. H., taking credit to himself for setting forth the volume—a claim by no means allowable beyond the imminent danger, had he not intervened, that the MS. or MSS. would have completely disappeared. We discern no higher or other merit in the stationer; and it is the more regrettable and unpardonable, inasmuch as Thorpe appears to have been a man of more than average standing, who might have served us all by making the story clear, instead of handing us a senseless and nearly insoluble puzzle. He was at this time a man of about thirty, the son of an innholder of Barnet.

I have ventured just above on the statement, that no duplicate texts of any of the series is known, or has been cited as formerly existing. But it is obviously not the case, that no duplicates were ever made; and it is even a matter of certainty that various copies of at least some were executed under circumstances not at present ascertainable. For two, which are intrinsically as much a part of the collection as those belonging to the 4^o of 1609, meet the eye in the *editio princeps* of *Love's Labor's Lost* in 1598, and recur in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1599, with textual differences sufficiently material to justify the assumption of two independent sources of supply. Regarding the normal irregularity attendant on the publication of the plays, it would be rash to conclude that the version in this particular drama, although it purports to have received touches from the hand of the author, is the genuine one, yet *primâ facie* the readings of the 4^o of *Love's Labor's Lost* are apt to strike one as more authoritative than those of a book produced under such equivocal conditions as the *Pilgrim*. The main point, however, is that an ostensibly new and enlarged view of the question is created by the indisputable coexistence of two texts of two sonnets concurrent with the rest, and by the not unreasonable inference, that this book, as it was put into type in 1609, was not only imperfectly arranged, but failed to represent all that Shakespear

had written of this nature. For if the recovery of the actual contents of the 1609 volume was fortuitous, the preservation of the two items not printed there was equally so; nor do we know how many others there may have been, scattered here and there, and never regained. We readily perceive that Jaggard, instead of appropriating the sonnets introduced into the play, obtained other transcripts, and that the Editor of 1609—ten years later—made use of neither, although this pair of stanzas presents the aspect of conveniently falling into the text of the *Sonnets* after No. 152. Beyond them there is the letter in Act iv., sc. 3, thrown into metrical form, and making rather more than the canonical number of lines, yet which strikes one as having been a composition lying by the author, like the others, and, according to a very usual practice among early dramatists, brought in on the first opportunity.

Thorpe addresses Mr. W. H. as the sole Begetter of the Sonnets. Assuredly, if he comprehended the generally accepted meaning of a common word, he wished to signify that this gentleman was exclusively instrumental in inducing the poet to write them; for the difference between the forms *beget* and *get* is intrinsically unimportant, and neither bore or will bear in this case the forced meaning of mere acquisition. When we have persuaded ourselves, that such must be the explanation, we, or some of us, are swayed by an irresistible feeling, that we are no nearer to the truth or the facts; and we are almost compelled to speculate, whether Thorpe was actually ignorant, when he obtained the MS. or MSS., of the circumstances, under which it or they had been composed. Although he lived so near to the publication of the *Palladis Tamia* of Meres in 1598, and received into his hands the unprinted Sonnets from a person inferentially conversant with their nature and history, communications were then so amazingly imperfect and accidental, that Thorpe may have been as unaware that W. H. was merely a gatherer of material, as Shakespear himself was in 1612-13, that a stationer had put forth as his work poems from another pen within the same twelvemonth. For

there is every indication, that his eye had not fallen on the re-impression of the *Passionate Pilgrim* some time after its appearance. Whether Thorpe printed the book exactly as it came to his hands, *plus* title-page and dedication, without any editorial interference, and whether the omission of certain matter, as above indicated, was due to the negligence of the actual gatherer of the MSS., we want fuller information, before we can decide. But it is not easy to understand in either case how the editor could have been unaware of the two sonnets already twice in type, and so naturally pertinent to the subject-matter.

So long ago as 1874* the present writer adduced an apparently new and a rather strong piece of evidence to demonstrate the unlikelihood of a person in the position of Thorpe venturing to address a nobleman in the terms of the dedication of 1609, and set side by side two dedicatory epistles by him, one to John Florio in 1610, and another to *William Earl of Pembroke* in 1616, exhibiting most conclusively the contrast in the relations toward the literary man and the peer. In the epistle to Florio, Thorpe signs himself: "Yours in true hearted love, T. T."; but in that to his lordship he writes: "Your Lordships humbly devoted, T. Th."; and, moreover, in the latter case he rehearses all Lord Pembroke's titles, while in the former he signalizes Florio as "a true favourer of forward spirits."

But beyond these points we note that, in inscribing the 1616 book to the Earl, Thorpe thought it necessary or judicious to emphasize his sense of the liberty, which so mean a man used in encroaching on the privacy of a personage of such high station and such scanty leisure, and pleaded, that he took the step at the prayer of the departed author, who regarded his lordship as "the true and real upholder of learned endeavours." A few lines lower down, the obsequious stationer reiterates his sense of the vast disparity of rank in the words: "pardon my presumption, great Lord, from so mean a man to so great a person."

* *Prefaces, Dedications, Epistles*, 1874, pp. 226-9.

Yet in 1609—seven years prior, but when Lord Herbert had succeeded to the superior title by the death of his father in 1601 about eight or nine years—this same Thorpe, as we are invited, if not required, to believe, approached him as “Mr. W. H.,” and precisely in the kind of strain, which in 1610 he deemed, and rightly deemed, appropriate in dealing with a man of letters, who was, no doubt, a more or less intimate acquaintance.

It has been pleaded in an analogous case that William Kemp the actor inscribed his *Nine Days' Wonder*, 1600, in very familiar language to Anne Fitton, who, as well as her younger sister Mary, was one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour. In the first place, I reply that the Fittons—the two ladies of that name—appear to have been unusually affable, and, secondly, the terms of Kemp's epistle are not wanting in deference. He addresses himself “To the true Ennobled Lady, and his most bountifull Mistris,” and concludes with “Your worthy Ladiships most vnworthy servant.” He gives her her maiden name; but she was at this time Lady Newdegate. The Fitton sisters were what would be now designated *free and easy* people; and Lady Penelope Rich, whose name Barnfield associated with his *Affectionate Shepherd*, was a personage of the same type. The youthful poet superscribes a couple of dedicatory stanzas “To the Right Excellent and most beautifull Lady, the Ladie Penelope Ritch,” and below we read: “Your Honour's most affectionate and perpetually deuoted Shepheard, Daphnis.” Barnfield, a mere lad of twenty, was more familiar in his tone toward Lady Penelope than Kemp toward Lady Newdegate. Enigmatical and, as we should perhaps judge, eccentric addresses, as I shall hereafter shew, if it were needful, were about the earlier Stuart time not unfrequent. The theatre itself had contributed to level social distinctions in certain ways. But the fashion and license had set in during the reign of Elizabeth, and the present may be, on the whole, the best place for mentioning an example. In 1599 Anthony Gibson edited a translation from the French by Anthony Munday of a piece called *A Woman's Worth*; it is perhaps obser-

vable that it is dedicated to Elizabeth, Countess of Southampton; but the two auxiliary points about the book are that, (1.) on the title-page it is said to be "written [? translated] by one that hath heard much, seene much, but knowes a great deale more," which occult declaration is succeeded by Munday's familiar motto: *Patere aut abstine*; and (2.) that of the four introductory sonnets by Gibson, one is addressed to Mary Fitton, who thus seems to have still maintained her ground in the world of fashion and letters and her situation at Court. A reference to my *Bibliographical Collections* will shew that other members of the family were long more or less mixed up with public matters, and that in 1595 a certain E.C. inscribed his volume of Sonnets to Edward Fitton, Esquire.

It strikes me, nevertheless, as out of keeping with what we know of the relation of literary men of any class, especially of dramatists and poets, to the aristocracy at this time to assume, that Shakespear would venture to control directly or otherwise the marriage of Lord Herbert; and it is to be always borne in mind that that nobleman was a very young man indeed, when the *Sonnets* were published, and scarcely more than a child, when many of them were written and circulating in MS. He became Earl of Pembroke at one-and-twenty in 1601. The champions of the Herbert theory have gone so far as to cite the passage in *Much Ado about Nothing*:—

"Beat. . . . By my troth, I am exceeding ill, heigho!

Marg. For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

Beat. For the letter that begins them all, H."

and are so good as to assure us that H stands for Herbert. This is certainly as audacious and reckless a trespass on the impersonality of the plays, which we are elsewhere instructed to credit and respect, as can be conceived. It is the most gratuitous of assumptions. Charles Knight in a note on the place adduces an epigram of John Heywood, which the poet may have had under his eyes, and which supplies a more sensible gloss. The epigrams of Heywood were still popular in his day.

One clear ground of preference for the piratical origin of the volume may be thought to be the readiness of Shakespear, ever so apathetic in the unfair treatment by printers and publishers of his literary property, to tolerate the transaction of Thorpe, carried out under his eyes, as it were, during his residence at a stone's throw, so long as it was confined to the familiar disregard of copyright, by which Shakespear was of course only a common sufferer; but it is highly questionable, whether even his forbearance would have extended so far as to allow the association of such a book with Lord Pembroke, had he really been the hero or subject of it. That he was, is a perfectly modern theory dating from about 1830, and I do not hesitate to pronounce it an excessively absurd one.

It is a mere collateral point, yet I just again note that to some—most—of the few known copies of *Troilus and Cressida*, published in the same year as the *Sonnets*, is prefixed an epistle headed: "A neuer writer to an euer reader—News," which I have already ascribed to the pen of Thorpe, and which is a second example of the taste at this time for the fantastic and mysterious. Again, a preface to a historical tract of 1607 connected with the Netherlands (B. M. Cat. 1077. d. 59) is somewhat similarly superscribed: "Newes to the Reader, or to whom the Buyer desires to send Newes," and the signature at end is: "Thine, W. BB." These are sidelights, for what they are worth. In forming an opinion on a matter belonging to a particular era, we have to throw ourselves back into that era, so far as we are enabled, and not commit the error of measuring our ancestors by our own standard.

The most recent edition which I have seen of the most recent *Life of Shakespear* seems to deal in a somewhat cavalier, if not indeed flippant way with Thorpe, who was a publisher of a rather wide range of books, and scarcely merits the depreciatory tone, in which Mr. Lee treats and dismisses him. A glance at the General Index to my *Collections* would have saved the writer

from this apparent misapprehension ; and it is essential for a literary inquirer even of the exalted pretensions of Mr. Lee, if he introduces such particulars, to study accuracy and truth. He fails to do so here ; and I shall have occasion to shew that it is an habitual fault. Dates and titles often operate influentially in deciding doubtful questions ; but the contemptuous mention of Thorpe is particularly unfortunate, since it is an unjust aspersion, by which nothing tangible is gained. In coming across the manuscript of the Sonnets, the stationer, or whatever he was, merely followed a practice not uncommon in those, and even in later, days ; but, although we should not have been much poorer without them, Thorpe took no greater liberty than the printers of some of the plays had already done, without admitting on his behalf the speculative premises, that he had a confederate in the background, to wit the author.

The possibly unintentional injustice done to Thorpe may be thought to acquire additional gravity from an omission on the part of Mr. Lee to concede that credit to the promoter of the book, which it strikes me that he eminently deserves, as the first person who appears to have presaged the enduring fame of the author. He terms him *Our Ever-Living Poet* ; and he so terms him in 1609. Shakespear had at earlier dates been warmly commended by many admirers, but merely in the same sense and measure, that others received general or specific encomiums on their performances. The language of Thorpe was, and is, to be interpreted in a manner far more correspondent with modern ideas than it was with the ideas of the most advanced judges of the poet's own day. The literary speculator, of whom Mr. Lee does not impress me with the notion of knowing much, was immensely before his time, and in four words defined the permanent station of Shakespear more accurately even than Milton's Epitaph, or Dryden in that very perspicacious notice, which forms part of his *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*, 1668.

I anticipate the objection that Thorpe applied this form of

lofty eulogy to the writer, not of the Plays, but of the Sonnets. Surely the word *Poet* could not be employed in reference to Shakespear without contemplating his dramatic achievements, which, in 1609, comprised nearly all his greatest contributions to the theatres; and the inference rather is, that the publisher of the Sonnets founded his hope of their favourable acceptance on the fame already won by their composer in another and greater field.

The humble bibliographer farther intervenes to suggest that there are two points in the title-page of the *Sonnets* inviting some attention. The first is the laconic structure of their introductory leaf, almost recalling the succinct terms of the forefronts of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and the variation in copies, where sometimes the book is said to be on sale by William Aspley, and sometimes by John Wright, at different addresses. Thorpe, in fact, as was his custom, placed his venture in the hands of others for disposal concurrently; he was the middleman, who did not take the money over the counter. Whether he invited Shakespear to accept any, I decline to guess.

The identity of Thorpe is as clear as the ostensible and arguable improbability of his approach to a nobleman on his own account, not as in the case, where he sheltered himself under the request of a deceased author, with a familiar air entirely out of accord with his own practice and feeling in 1616 and with the usage of the time. Failing the acceptance of *W. H.* as the initials of William Herbert, who succeeded to the earldom in 1633, critics and biographers have proposed other solutions of what was plain enough, when it was done, and is a riddle only to us. Yet of all the alternatives, which have come under my notice none is so plausible as that suggested by an entry in one of the sale-catalogues of Mr. C. J. Stewart, the eminent bookseller, where a MS. of one of Thomas Middleton's plays (the *Game at Chess*) is found dedicated to *Mr. William Hammond*. Who this gentleman was, remains uncertain; but William Hammond of St. Alban's Court, Nonnington, Kent, a kinsman of Thomas Stanley, and a nephew

of George Sandys, published a volume of poems in 1655, and may have had a father of the same names, who had literary tastes and sympathies. This is a bold conjecture; and one merely advances it, because it is at least on a likelier track than the Pembroke one. The objection and difficulty lie in the circumstance, that we fail, possibly from insufficient evidence, to see, how Hammond could be the only begetter of the *Sonnets*; and on the other hand, the survival of the Middleton MS. was perfectly fortuitous, and was perhaps only one link in a chain. The Hammonds of St. Alban's Court, if Mr. William Hammond was of their stock (the elegiac writer, James Hammond, was a descendant) might have told us the whole story; and gratified—or disappointed—us by solving the problem.

There is, however, a good deal more than a pretence to a chain of evidence, lending us courage to form a somewhat more favourable opinion of the Kentish and Hammond theory. Besides the Hammonds of Nonnington, there were the Walsinghams of Chislehurst, their relatives by marriage the Manwoods of St. Stephens, Canterbury, the Chewtes and Derings of Surrenden, the Manningshams of East Malling, the Chapmans of Godmersham, the Lambardes of Westcombe and Sevenoaks, the Goldwells of Godington, and the Oxindens of Dene or Barham, near Canterbury—all people of culture. With the Walsinghams Christopher Marlowe had been on intimate terms, and was at their house, when an order was given for his arrest in connection with his atheistical opinions. He eluded the holder of the warrant, and died miserably at Deptford in the June of 1593, leaving behind him certain unpublished MSS.

Five years later, Edward Blount the stationer, having obtained, as I reasonably conclude, from the Walsinghams, independently or through their common friend George Chapman, all that the deceased dramatist had finished of his version of *Hero and Leander*, hastily published it—the First Sestiad—while the interest and curiosity in the unhappy case of the translator was yet fresh. But

Chapman, having been requested or having proposed to complete the work, did so in a somewhat rapid manner, and in the same year Blount was enabled to issue a second impression, he inscribing the first Sestiad (Marlowe's) to Sir Thomas Walsingham and Chapman the remainder to Lady Walsingham. Chapman expresses himself in terms of gratitude to her ladyship; and in 1605 he prefixed to his *All Fools* a dedicatory sonnet to her husband not found in all copies. *All Fools* was published by Thomas Thorpe; and the same person brought out the *Gentleman Usher* in 1606 and the *Byron* in 1608. I should not add here a particular reference to the second edition of Thomas Wright's *Passions of the Mind*, 1604, if it were not the case, that it possesses a copy of laudatory verses by Jonson, that it has a second title-page introducing an Addition occasioned by the death of Queen Elizabeth, with the name of Thorpe as the stationer (not vendor), and that it is dedicated to Shakespear's Southampton.

The original association of Chapman the poet with Kent is attributable, in the presence of the greatest darkness respecting many points of his early life, to his presumed relationship with the Chapmans of Godmersham—indeed Anthony Wood thought him to be a Kentish man; and this Godmersham branch was related to the Manningshams, who had at one time belonged to Hertfordshire. Of the Manningshams the representative at this time was John Manningham, from an entry in whose *Diary* Mr. Hunter first discovered the fact, of course unknown to the illiterate Inn itself, that *Twelfth Night* had been performed in the Middle Temple Hall in 1601-2. So we gradually repeople the Kent of Shakespear's day with a circle distinguished by its literary sympathy and its friendly contact with such men as Marlowe, Chapman, and—why not others? And the reader may be farther reminded, that one of these notable centres in the county, as the poet knew it, was the home of the Oxindens, where the first ascertained attempt to form a collection of the early quartos is proved to have been made; and that the Manwoods possessed a library of con-

temporary literature, the occasional occurrence of books with their autographs and arms sufficiently establishes. Kent thus appears to gain an inedited literary and even Shakespearian interest cognate to that already claimed for some of the southern and western outskirts of London, and for one or two points in the Midlands, Coventry and Warrington, about the same point of time.

It happened two years subsequently to the acquisition by Blount of the MS. of *Hero and Leander*, that his friend Thorpe fell in with a second posthumous relic of Marlowe, equally fragmentary, namely, a linear version of the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Ostensibly this discovery was made elsewhere; the Lucan and the Musæus were in different hands, or the possessor of the latter was not aware of the fact, till perhaps Thorpe drew his attention to the matter. At any rate, Thorpe, not Blount, found the Lucan, and seems to have entered into a negociation with more than one stationer, or to have formed more than one plan, before he issued the poem separately in 1600 with an introductory epistle to Blount, whom he expressly preferred to a nobler patron, and to whom he acknowledges prior indebtedness. The original notion about the appearance of the Lucan in print had been that it should be annexed to the republication of *Hero and Leander* in 1600; and it is actually specified on the title-page of that volume as part of the contents. All this tends to exemplify the relations between Blount and Thorpe, Blount still retaining his interest in the Musæus, although his name does not occur in every impression. These two men of business were evidently of somewhat congenial and cognate pursuits. During many years the former had no settled address, but, like Thorpe, deposited volumes on sale with a third party; and, as we have observed, he enters first on the scene. In that very year 1600 he had had the opportunity of returning the compliment paid to him by his *confrère*, when he brought out in 1600 an anonymous version of a work by Conestagio on the annexation of Portugal to Spain by Phillip II. in 1580; but he preferred to associate the undertaking

with Lord Southampton, whom he informs that the translator was his (Blount's) respected friend and a gentleman much devoted to his Honour. Beyond this imperfect disclosure he does not venture; perhaps he did not wish the friend to stand between him and his lordship. Blount had forsaken for the moment his Kentish acquaintances, and was treading on new ground—that first opened by Shakespear himself in 1593.

There is no other peculiarity about this course than the certainly uncustomary proceeding in the case of the *Lucan* of the inscription by one bookseller (Thorpe) to a second (Blount) of a volume bearing the imprint of a third (Burre). Thorpe in 1600 plays the same anomalous part as he in 1609 played in regard to the *Sonnets* of Shakespear, where he figures, as we all know, as the "well-wishing adventurer," and similarly confines himself to the employment of agents for retailing purposes.

The preliminary inscription to Chapman's *Byron* offers the auxiliary interest of being likewise addressed to Sir Thomas Walsingham and his son and namesake jointly; and here the dramatist signalizes Sir Thomas as his honourable and constant friend, and compliments them both on their taste and scholarship, which placed them above "our ignorant gentlemen." In 1605 Thorpe was beginning to lay his hands on MSS. of Chapman, Jonson, and Coryat, with or without an understanding with the authors; and in the year immediately previous one of Jonson's pieces had been first entered to Blount, who transferred it to Thorpe, the latter issuing it with a metrical commentary by Chapman on the drama.

We seem altogether to make out an intimacy at least from 1593 between the Walsinghams, Christopher Marlowe, George Chapman, Edward Blount, and Thomas Thorpe. All these were in different senses in touch with each other, Marlowe of course dropping out of the circle at an early stage; and Thorpe had too keen a nose for eligible finds to leave a stone unturned, if Blount or himself heard of any commodity within reach likely to take the

public. The former had no deficiency of assurance, for in 1605 he acquired the MS. of a small volume by Robert, afterward Sir Robert, Dallington, printed it without the author's knowledge, and then dedicated it to him!

The deduction, which arises from this preamble is, that the Musæus and Lucan, either one or both, were found at Chislehurst after the death of Marlowe, having been taken or sent thither by the poet, or that, the former having occurred in the hands of the Walsinghams, the other may have been preserved at their kinsfolk the Manwoods', whom Marlowe equally knew. These may be more or less plausible inferences; but it enters more into the nature of an hypothesis without question, whether the Shakespear MS. was similarly deposited at Nonnington, the residence of the Hammonds, and at a considerable distance from Chislehurst, and in what manner and sense a member of that family was instrumental in "begetting" the collection, as we have it in type, for there had been a lengthened lapse of time between the find of the Lucan and that of the Sonnets; and, again, the latter stood in a materially different position, since they were, according to our sole available information, scattered in various quarters, and therefore demanded at least the process of being brought together, a service, which we are instructed by Thorpe, that we owe to Mr. W. H. Thorpe had at intervals secured sundry MSS. by other writers, keeping his hands tolerably full down to 1608: in his eyes a literary production was mainly printer's copy; and the approximation to the begetter or collector of the Sonnets, in the same range of country (as I dare to contend) as the Marlowe and Lucan, occurred at a juncture, perhaps, when he was looking out for a new speculation. He was a man, who manifestly, in spite of his excellent wishes, was no Quixote; for the *Sonnets*, with its forty leaves or eighty pages, cost him more than he felt he was justified in dispensing to the public at a groat, and he fixed the publishing price most unusually at fivepence, as attested by two contemporary evidences.

Independently of the Marlowe and Shakespear, and the two issues of Healey's Epictetus merely interesting to us from their Shakespearian bearing, Thorpe is answerable, as I have shown, for several other ventures of more or less trifling bulk, and his career extended down to 1625. A more complete acquaintance with his personal fortunes might have revealed something unexpectedly useful; we recognise in him a small literary benefactor and something of the humourist; but his footprints are indistinct, and he vanishes into eternal darkness with no farther sign.

The career of Edward Blount terminated about the same date as that of Thorpe. But it was distinguished by two literary events, to which I have now to advert, because both have a clear and direct bearing on Shakespear at a time anterior, not to the completion, but to the issue, of the Sonnets. In 1601 appeared a strange composite volume, now of extraordinary rarity, principally made up of a translation by Robert Chester of an Italian poem, to which he gave the title of *Love's Martyr or Rosalin's Complaint*, and of a second composition on the legend of Arthur. At the end, however, occurs an appendix or supplement, which forms the real value and interest of the book in the shape of original verses by Shakespear, Marston, Chapman, and Jonson, those by Shakespear extending to eighteen stanzas. A peculiarity of this book, apart from the circumstance that it was a more ambitious undertaking than the *Musæus*, running in fact nearly to two hundred pages, was the absence of any place of sale and indeed of any vendor, for at the foot of the title-page we meet only with: *London Imprinted for E. B. 1601*. Here we appear to have the fruit of another and more extensive and varied *trouvaille*, in which Thorpe had no visible interest or hand; the contributions from the pens of Shakespear and other eminent poets had been acquired piecemeal; Chapman Blount already knew; and the Arthurian subject-matter of the main portion by Chester recommended it to adoption rather than Chester's name. The stanzas by Shakespear must be taken to have belonged to the same body of floating

material as the Sonnets, *A Lover's Complaint*, and the fragments in the *Pilgrim*; they are obviously early work—inferior even to the *Sonnets*; and they had probably strayed from the author's hands in common with the rest of the scattered papers gradually recovered and printed with or without leave.

Blount was ever on the book-hunting track. In 1608 he secured the MS. of *Pericles*; and could have authoritatively told us, whence he derived it, and how far Shakespear was concerned. He was by possibility uncertain, whether his MS. was the sole one in existence, for he entered it as a precaution at Stationers' Hall on May 20. But he did not proceed any farther, and surrendered the copyright to another stationer, who brought out two impressions in the following year. Blount seems scarcely to have possessed that sort of literary sensibility evinced by Thorpe.

His most eminent, though by no means his latest, achievement was one of far greater magnitude and of a wholly different nature. It was the English version of Montaigne, of which enough has already been heard, and which might never have appeared, had the one projected by Edward Aggas in 1595 been duly executed. It could not have been worse than Florio's; and from the long experience of Aggas it would probably have been superior.

The discoveries of these two nugget-winners, Thorpe and Blount, are represented by a small group of books, bearing date between 1598 and 1625, without which our national literature would have been forsooth poorer; the Lucan and Musæus, the Shakespear's Sonnets, and the Florio's Montaigne, ran a considerable risk of perishing, had they not stepped forward; and so let them not want their due!

Edward Alleyn registers the purchase in 1609 under household stuff as "a book, Shaksper Sonettes, 5d"—and a second copy apparently bought at the time, which long lay at Althorp, bears a note on the title of the same original cost doubtless under similar circumstances with the contemporary memorandum on the last

page: "Commendacions to my very kind and approued ffrind, B.M."—seeming to bespeak the acquisition by some one, who subsequently gave it to an acquaintance. With this inestimable salvage the Malone copy of *Venus and Adonis*, 1593, may, as already explained, possibly make up a triad; and they are happily, one and all, in English custody. The Oxinden dramatic library, elsewhere noticed, was of early, but I cannot quite affirm, of coeval formation.

There are no critical appreciations either of the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, or of the *Sonnets*, at or near the time of their original appearance. Their present rarity bespeaks in some measure their temporary popularity, but in a larger one the result of prolonged neglect almost amounting to oblivion. The sole positive evidence of any contemporary of note having manifested sufficient interest in the work to induce him to bestow a few pence on the purchase is the entry in the Diary of Alleyn. The copy is not now at Dulwich College. It may be one of those in the Bodleian, or Alleyn may not have retained it after perusal. Yet, although he was not a man of culture, he acquired a notable collection of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, which remained intact at Dulwich, I believe, till it was mercilessly and dishonestly pillaged by Garrick and Malone.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Sonnets continued. Absolute authenticity of the entire text canvassed. Long interval, over which the Sonnets extended (? 1592-1603). A line in Sonnet 94 common to the play of Edward III., 1596. Support for the view that there is no inner or occult sense in the series. Temptation to look into the Sonnets for biographical helps. Absence of real editorship in them. Influence of Barnfield in some, and of other sonneteers. The advocates for the secret history of these productions. Pembroke and Southampton. The Essex plot. The passage or scene from Richard II. publicly performed. No evidence of Shakespear's participation.

WHERE obscurity and uncertainty so largely enter, as they do here, into a topic, the natural consequence is that conjecture and deduction have to occupy a more conspicuous place than in the treatment of one, the illustration of which is mainly dependent on absolute facts and statements; and hence arises the danger, lest a writer or editor, in avoiding too strong a tendency to guesswork, becomes too sceptical, or the reverse. Now, the Sonnets, as published by Thorpe, are usually accepted as exclusively from the pen of Shakespear, and the similarity of style doubtless supports such a view. But Thorpe does not tell us, where Mr. W. H. met with the manuscript copies, which in 1598, according to Meres, were in several hands; nor are we informed, whether the original autographs were employed, or whether the "loose papers," to which Meres alludes, were transcribed for the press. The superficial assertion, that the book contains only Shakespear's work, goes for nothing; Jaggard had said the same thing about the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599. The circumstances, it is true, are sensibly different; the earlier collection embraces matter palpably not Shakespearian; but there is quite sufficient probability, if some of the Sonnets should raise a suspicion of a different parentage, to

second the doubt in the imminent chance that among the Thorpe find there is a quatorzain or so inadvertently attributed to the writer of the rest. Thus we find No. 107 embodying references, which can scarcely belong to a period anterior to the death of Elizabeth and the succession of the house of Stuart, or, in other words, here is a sonnet, which could not have formed part of the series, one of the loose papers, particularized by Meres as in circulation in 1598. Let me transcribe it:—

“Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Suppos'd as forfeit to a confin'd doom.
The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd,
And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd,
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
Now with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.”

Within these poor and rough lines, of which the eighth is neither sense nor metre,* we are told, that there are means of tracing the death of Elizabeth and the advent of James I., which may be so; but some of the biographers equally see the release of Lord Southampton in 1603, which shews their faculty of penetrating below the surface much farther than I can. The allusion to the change of dynasty, however, has this virtue, that it seems to indicate the accession of new matter posterior to the Meres notice, and why should this sonnet be the sole afterbirth? The clue to their repository is vague enough in 1598; it is to be collected that such of them as were in existence—the bulk—were scattered—that the writer did not hold them; and this process of gradual augmentation, as occasion offered, may have proceeded nearly down to the date of

* I return to this elsewhere.

their transfer to type. Mr. W. H. gathered the stragglers together either for Thorpe, or did so *proprio motu*, and handed them over to that individual on his application direct or indirect—through Blount or the Walsinghams. Whichever course was followed, I have shown that the person responsible for the text overlooked at all events two sonnets long since printed, and authenticated by their connection with others, as well as by their presence in *Love's Labor's Lost*; and he may by possibility have been misled as to the authorship of some, which he inserts.

The presence of Shakespear in London, when the *Sonnets* were printed, and his seeming lack of interest, and even denial of a voice, in the business, only represented what had occurred again and again, when his plays were openly pirated by adventurous and careless stationers, when *Hamlet* itself was given to the press in a deformed state in 1603, and a second time in 1604; yet the peculiar nature of the *Sonnets*, their survival in a manuscript shape among a private circle, and the probable ignorance of the world at large of their existence, contribute to place them in a somewhat different position from that of actual and popular dramas. Save in this case, Thorpe does not appear to have had any business-relations with the poet; but there is just this distant possibility that Shakespear was an accessory before the fact, insomuch that he acquiesced in the step, and even had a hand in the title-page, which is characteristically and suspiciously laconic. Supposing, however, such to have been the case, the internal history of the book remains unaffected. The author and the publisher of course knew who Mr. W. H. was. They, or at least Thorpe, made what was clear excessively dark, and we are now trying to undo the mischief. Of conjectures there is a surfeit; of proof there is absolutely not a tittle. Nevertheless the suggestion that Shakespear had been unwilling to make the *Sonnets* public property in the usual manner, and offered no opposition to their appearance with the strange credentials appended to them by a third party, thus absolving him from censure, is may-be not undeserving of

attention. If he did not trouble himself to castigate the text and determine the sequence, he merely followed what we gather to have been his habitual practice.

One reason for the readiness of the author to fall, if he did so, into the scheme of Thorpe, and even to collude with him, may have been the fear of what would be thought of such a volume at home in Stratford, if it was reported to have appeared with his sanction in the same way as the other poems. We have to bear in mind, when we look toward Stratford, and try to realize even the utmost possibility of the case, that down to 1597 very little of his acknowledged work had passed the press. The bulk was retained by the theatres, and every effort used to preclude its publication.

The average reader of the Plays skips the Sonnets as dull and unintelligible with some tincture of licentiousness. The attentive and intelligent one rises from the perusal (in reviewers' parlance) with an impression, that they present numerous inconsistencies and contradictions. The laborious and scientific student does not actually progress much farther, or more nearly approach a solution acceptable at sight.

The Sonnets, in other words, were formerly regarded as mere exercises of poetical fancy and caprice. At present they are held to be luminous in a sort of chiaroscuro way with biographical and historical episodes, and to have, as it were, a *dramatis personæ* of their own. Some of us have crossed over from one extreme to the other. A not unfair or untrue estimate of these compositions may be, that they most unfavourably compare with the dramas of a writer, whose genius was, above all, dramatic, much in the same way that Mr. Swinburne's and the late Laureate's plays compare unfavourably with their lyrics, where they were, on the whole, so supreme, and which are anyhow their speciality. It is unfortunate, when a waterman undertakes to drive a mail coach,

Robin Goodfellow, in his most tricky mood, never used his victims worse than Shakespear and Thorpe between them have

used us in this matter. We wade through the more than a century and a half of stanzas, encountering stumbling-blocks at short distances, and at length arrive—not at the conclusion, for there is none, but at a place, where there is no more to be read. The work is *ατελος*, a literary *torso*, loose papers verily! Small, very small loss to the world and to the fame of the writer had it been, if the MS. had perished. But then the passage in Meres would have survived to lead us to imagine its contents so different, and make us miserable for ever.

The order of the collection is manifestly casual, arbitrary, and unauthoritative. The first and second stanzas deserve to be considered among the best in point of thought and style; but they constitute an abrupt commencement. As there is no warrant for the assumption that the author interposed—always premising that the whole is due to one pen, for we cannot be absolutely sure of so much as that—the arrangement must be due to W. H., Thorpe, or the typographer. Of the persons, who held the MSS., our knowledge is restricted to the bare statement of Meres in 1598, that the sonnets were then in the hands of friends—whom or how many, we do not learn; there is the possibility, that the holder of some may have been the recipient of sonnets by other literary acquaintances, and that he placed all such trifles together without distinction; nor would any attempt at a new arrangement be of great avail, when the context of each sonnet, or at least each short succession of sonnets, is so evidently the fruit of some momentary impulse or some passing impression.

The play of the *Reign of Edward III.* had been printed in 1596, and is probably as well entitled to a place among those which are inserted in the folios as the rest; but the immediate point is that a line in this drama also forms the concluding one of the 94th Sonnet, from which the inference may be that the latter was composed about the same time, while the recollection of the image was fresh in the writer's mind, and, moreover, that the series was at this date in progress of occasional formation, as some idea

struck Shakespear amid his ordinary work, and was laid aside, till the bulk amounted to the contents of the Thorpe find.

The opinion, if such a word may be allowed, that there is no inner sense in the Sonnets, on which we can safely depend, receives a confirmation, if a feeble one, from the disregard of the sequence of 1609 in the collective volume of 1640, where the arrangement is entirely different, and the quatorzains present themselves in the shape of detached sentiments—indeed much in that, in which I apprehend that they were periodically composed. The edition of 1640 had equally no critical supervision, and was little more than a bookseller's venture, comprising, like the first edition of the *Pilgrim*, 1612, pieces not by Shakespear. It was the last chance of separating from the sonnets written by the poet any not from his pen, looking at the inferiority and even the incongruity of some of the series and the suspicious circumstances, under which the book was ushered into existence. And it was a chance of course not utilized, which it was not the aim of the bookseller to regard.

The quality, no less than the true origin of the Sonnets has long been a debated point, since a large number, perhaps the majority, of admirers of the plays turn from these and indeed from all the lyrical productions of the same pen with almost more than indifference. As for the Sonnets, they are certainly open to many strictures. They strike one as an inconsequent rhapsody; the sentiment is often thin and weak, the diction poor, and the metre faulty. Yet the case stands with them, as it does with the remaining poems, differently from the dramatic series. There may be in places insertions of words and even portions of lines, made necessary by the defective state of the printer's copy; yet substantially we hold in our hands to-day the *ipsissima verba* for better or for worse.

If the Sonnets were arranged by an editor, it must have surely been one, who was ignorant of any covert allusion or any necessity for consecutiveness; but the presumption is, that the printer received

from Thorpe the MSS. much as they came to hand from various sources, and committed the 154 quatorzains to type, as we at present see them. The whole, or nearly the whole, wears the aspect of having been the product of those years, when the writer was engaged in London in revising other men's labours, and possibly in taking parts in the performances. Had he written them in or near the year of issue, I apprehend that they would have been very different; and, again, had a sensible proportion been the fruit of maturer thought, the contrast would have been unmistakably powerful. As the matter stands, the entire work is of the same second-rate leaven—a companion to the sonnets of Constable, Watson, and Barnfield; and the encomium of Meres in 1598, if it is not accurate criticism or criticism at all, is just the sort of praise, which he extends to the three writers above named, and which is the best deserved, I take it, by Constable of all the four, although we must not forget that Watson was almost the pioneer in this class of composition and in the imitation of the Italian school.

In the Sonnets forsooth we see the poetical expression of the author in its earliest and rawest form. The inequality of merit and power are to be securely attributed, not to any process of revision, but to the term of years, over which the accumulation of matter seems to have spread, that is to say, from 1587, when Shakespear was four and twenty, to 1603, when he was forty, and to the consequent growth of taste and experience. Yet few will be probably found to contend that, had the poet written nothing else, we should be thinking of him to-day, as we do; his strength was clearly not in the sonnet, nor indeed in lyrical work of any kind. He was essentially the Dramatist. In the Play his genius found full scope, and in the Play alone; with some—many—brilliant exceptions, even the interspersed songs are comparatively inferior.

Taking the main bulk of the collection of 1609, it may be regarded as chronologically concurrent with the first and second epochs of dramatic work, 1587-1600, when Shakespear passed

through the experimental stage of editorial recension to that of original authorship, but when the power to create *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello*, and the *Tempest* could only just be surmised from the superiority of the second series of dramas to their predecessors. The poet never displayed a parallel advance in lyrical poetry, partly perchance from want of leisure and the more lucrative returns from the theatres, yet also partly from the consciousness of a less marked bent in the other direction.

There is, in two or three of the series, a vein of self-glorification, which is not perceptible in the riper work of the author, and which seems to betray or confirm their early origin. The poet tells the object addressed that he will live in his "powerful rhyme," which is to survive monuments of princes and other imposing mundane things—is, in fact, to be *ære perennius*. This perilous form of conceit Shakespear outgrew, and it is scarcely discernible even by inference in the plays, where there would not be, of course, the same licence for that sort of personal allusion, and where the few examples of the kind in relation to others might have been profitably omitted.

Whatever judgment may be passed on these effusions as poetical efforts, they are not inferior in that respect to *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and they are infinitely more interesting and important as biographical documents and guides, in spite of all that has been expressed and written to the contrary. Within these lines I irrevocably assert that the means are supplied to us of adding very sensibly to our acquaintance with a very obscure subject, and of drawing nearer to a tiresomely mysterious and reticent personality. That is their worth—their sole worth. I rejoice that we possess them. I grieve that they are so poor. Yet, had they been of a finer yarn, they might—probably would—have been less fruitful in co-operative suggestion.

The antecedent comparison with Barnfield extends beyond the style and cast of thought: for it is plain that, when he composed his Sonnets, Shakespear, who in the *Venus and Adonis* and

Lucrece had adopted a different class of story as his groundwork, was also influenced by the Virgilian model so transparent in the *Affectionate Shepherd*, and traceable back to Greek and even Oriental sentiment, where the relationship was less fanciful and more gross. Let us recollect, however, that he was the senior of Barnfield by a decade, and that we are entitled to look for something better from a man of one-and-thirty, Shakespear's age in 1598, than from one of twenty, Barnfield's age in 1594.

The extreme youth of Barnfield excuses the blemishes of style, costume, and matter readily discoverable in his maiden effort. The classical writers served as general patterns in those days, and in addition to them the Italian school had begun to exercise an influence of a rather despotic nature on the English sentimental writers. Barnfield, when he took an old man's part in his first poem, acted in deference to the early Italian conceit countenanced by Petrarch no less than by Virgil; and he to some extent followed up the same artificial device in the sonnets appended to his *Cynthia*, 1595.

I believe that the models furnished by Watson and other earlier masters in this school of writing were also of service to Shakespear; but this point has been treated by other inquirers.

The irresponsible and despotic power of the sonneteer is felt by no one so strongly as the sonneteer himself, who has been accustomed at all times to use his discretion with freedom and impunity. Taking the 154 items which compose the Shakespear series, the theories, hypotheses, and guesses advanced in regard to the meaning or aim of much that is found there establish the acknowledged existence of ambiguity; and this feature has been deepened and aggravated by our ignorance of the daily and intimate life of the poet during all the years of his separate residence in London. It is no satisfaction or assistance to be informed that there is perhaps no person of the period, occupying a similar position, of whom we know so much; for there is none as to whom a distant age has been taught to acquire so keen a

curiosity; and the dearth of particulars is perhaps the more surprising when it is taken into account that the poet was more or less constantly mixed up with affairs likely to involve publicity. He surely wrote letters; not a fragment of one has ever been beheld—only three or four signatures to documents, one accompanied by two monosyllables in his hand. He wrote his own plays, and corrected plays by other men; no trace of either species of record has come down to us. He held conversations with friends and acquaintances; only a scarcely intelligible remark about certain enclosures in his native place, and a statement at second hand that the conduct of Jaggard the printer in inserting the work of another man (Heywood) as his in a reprint of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1612, had offended him, have been preserved. Yet how little has been transmitted about such important persons, in a somewhat similar sphere of activity, as the Burbages, Alleyn, and Henslowe, and how far less we should have, had not Henslowe left a Diary, and had not Alleyn, besides leaving a Diary, founded a college, where his papers were deposited? I apprehend, notwithstanding, that in the case of Shakespear, whose avocations were so constant and so manifold during nearly thirty years, and who was a personage of such exceptional eminence, a mass of precious documentary and autograph matter was lost in some fire. The handful of papers which have escaped the ravages of neglect and accident, must be the slenderest salvage.

Yet it is to be taken into account that only a single manuscript of Jonson is known—that of the *Metamorphosed Gypsies*—and that we hold no original letters. We are indebted to Drummond's Notes of his conversations with the poet for a few particulars, and something is to be gleaned from the internal testimony of the Works. Of Marlowe, Greene, Nash, and other contemporaries the information is even scantier, although they wrote so much, and, except Marlowe, were before the world so long.

During four and twenty years, with occasional intermissions, of a by no means prolonged career, Shakespear was at work in

London day by day, mingling with friends, reading, writing, concluding agreements, and filling parts at the theatre ; and when every available source has been exhausted, we contemplate the accessions of three quarters of a century or more to our stores with a pleasure qualified by the fear that the end has been reached without enlightening us on many of the most vital problems.

CHAPTER XIV.

The biographical lesson of the Sonnets. The writer in London travels on horse-back to see a man-friend at a distance. On his return he broods over the separation. Hint of a third party, a woman, in the same direction. The writer is attached to the latter, but is aware of a rival, the man-friend. Laments the marriage of the couple. But consoles himself in a remarkable manner. The newly wedded folks and the writer dwell too far apart for frequent meetings. The marriage appears to be unfortunate for both parties concerned. The wife is a dark lady. The writer apprehends that she may shorten her husband's days. Observations on the question of complexion. One of the day. Analogy in Othello. Shakespear and Jonson's Masques of Blackness and Beauty. The Prince of Morocco in the Merchant of Venice. Virtue of contraries. A youthful reminiscence of Stratford in Sonnet 143. Despondent vein in some of the series. Hints at death and even suicide. Parallel passages from Hamlet and Measure for Measure illustrative of others in the Sonnets and in Montaigne on the subject of Death. Autobiographical worth of the Sonnets. Two of the group widely separated placed side by side (Nos. 2 and 73). The writer prematurely old at forty. The 111th Sonnet and Henry Chettle. Shakespear's abstention from complimentary addresses. Critical summary. Dr. Giles Fletcher, Shakespear's contemporary, on the nature of this class of writing.

IF we borrow the eyes of the latter-day seer to enable us to read the Sonnets aright, and blindly surrender our private judgment, we realize and credit many strange things, which we did not previously know, of which we had hardly dreamed as possible. In lieu of a succession of amatory and fanciful exercises, written at intervals under the sway of various humours, and so embodying, in common with the whole race of such products, the loose recollections of bygone years, a certain type of modern scholarship discloses to us unsuspected material for the biography of the writer and, yet more surprizing, for the secret annals of the court of Elizabeth. We are assisted, if we follow a guide, who has imbibed these views, in distinguishing passages in the lives of Lord Herbert

and Lord Southampton, the rivalry between the poet and the former nobleman in the affections of Mary Fitton, a maid of honour to the queen and the dark lady of the book, the discontent of Shakespear with his lot as a player, and his gratification at the return of Southampton to liberty and favour on the accession of James I. There remains, over and above, the conventional courtship by the sonneteer of the fair youth with the golden locks, who is identified with Herbert, and the apparent union of the dark lady with him, succeeded by a renewal of the original complaint, as if the order, in which we have received the matter, was false.

Herbert and Southampton figure at the actual Court of the Queen as two dissolute and turbulent young men, of whom one seduces Mary Fitton, and refuses to marry her, and the other seduces Elizabeth Vernon, and makes her that imperfect reparation. They both fell under the displeasure of their royal mistress: the former on this account, the latter for this and graver reasons. The patron of Shakespear was disgraced in 1598 through the commission of a serious misdemeanour, and in 1601 was implicated in the Essex plot. Cecil saved him from the scaffold; but he was imprisoned during the remainder of Elizabeth's reign. The 107th Sonnet is pronounced by some to commemorate his release.

The wild political scheme, which cost the Earl of Essex his life, is associated with an irregular performance in more than one place, even in the public street, prior to the day fixed for the execution of the *coup d'état*, of a theatrical spectacle representing the deposition of Richard II., but not construably connected with the drama by Shakespear. The actors were kept in ignorance, it is said, of the drift of the show, and Augustine Phillips, one of them, received forty shillings for the business—probably it was intrusted to his superintendence. There is no hint of the interposition of Shakespear; yet there is a powerful probability, that a rumour of the intention came to his ears, and that he had advisedly kept out of the way. Was he at Stratford? His father died there in the same autumn, and may have been previously ill.

Phillips was examined before the Council; but neither he nor the company suffered any penal consequences. Essex alone fell, and, according to the story, even he might have saved himself by a humble submission. The circumstances connected with the dramatic feature in the conspiracy were most extraordinary. The queen herself, in a conversation with William Lambarde the historian, August 4, 1601, assured him that the piece was shown with seditious intent "forty times in open streets and houses."* Southampton was scarcely less guilty than Essex; but his youth pleaded for him, and he celebrated his discharge from confinement, when James I. came to the throne, by a splendid performance at his own residence of "Love's Labor's Lost," at which Anne of Denmark was present, and in which it is hardly too much to assume that Shakespear took a part.

The exact nature of the play, or rather scene from a play, introduced into the late tragical episode has been variously stated. There seems to have been a piece on the reign of Henry IV., in which the deposition of his predecessor was introduced, anterior to Shakespear, as we possess it; and the printed copies of the latter do not comprise this incident previously to the second issue of 1608, where the title-page announces for the first time "new additions of the Parliament Scene and the deposing of King Richard." This novel feature, at least in type, was possibly a recension by the poet of the obnoxious political manifesto of 1601, which then existed in MS. as part of another work, and in 1608 was deemed presentable without danger or offence.

The batch of Sonnets has been held to embrace within it a veritable host of covert allusions and clues merely awaiting pursuit, and thus to constitute an unique biographical thesaurus. If we decline to accept this view, and treat these productions as occupying the same station as their numerous analogues in our own and other languages and literatures, alike ancient and modern, the really tangible points are very few and relatively immaterial. Supposing

* Sidney Lee, *Life*, 1899, p. 138.

that we admit the revelations as genuine and sincere, it is a logical *sequitur*, that all the extant collections of the same class are to be similarly interpreted, and many and many a literary life rewritten, saving only those instances, where the author has left a disclaimer. But such an exceptional course tempts us to summon to our assistance the well-worn maxim: *Ex uno disce omnes*. Perhaps to steer a middle course may be the safest and wisest plan; let us see, to how much that will amount.

In Sonnet 27 there are these lines:—

“Weary with toil I hasten to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tii’d;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body’s work’s expir’d:
For then my thoughts (*far from where I abide*)
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee—”

What are we to infer hence, if it is not that the author had paid a visit to a friend at a distance, and on his return brooded over the severance? But in No. 41 comes a disclosure that, besides the male friend, who resides far enough away to render the journey to and fro fatiguing, there is a third party to be considered, that party a woman; for the sonneteer says:—

“Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,
Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail’d;
And when a woman woos, what woman’s son
Will sourly leave her, till she have prevailed?
Ah me! but yet thou mightst my suit forbear,
And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
Who lead thee in their riot even there
Where thou art forc’d to break a twofold truth;
Hers by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
Thine by thy beauty being false to me.”

A rival is superseding the writer in the affection of the woman, and in the next stanza (a rare example of sequential propriety) has married her. For Shakespear immediately proceeds:—

“That thou hast her, it is not all my grief,
 And yet it may be said I lov'd her dearly;
 That she hath thee, is of my wailing chief,
 A loss in love that touches me more nearly—”

Wretched lines, which can import only that the man, by marriage, has inflicted a double wrong, in depriving his friend of his society as a bachelor, and of the woman of whom that friend was enamoured. But the quatorzain concludes with this felicitous consolation:—

“But here's my joy; my friend and I are one;
 Sweet flattery! Then she loves me alone.”

—a position which the new husband, unless he was unusually generous or unusually indifferent, was scarcely likely to acknowledge. When we reach No. 50, however, an expedition on horseback to the residence of the couple has been undertaken; and a succession of stanzas is occupied by a whimsical rhapsody, of which the exact purport or drift is problematical, as the allusions are directed to an individual, that individual almost beyond question a man; the lady disappears for a season. We come across her once more, however, in Stanza 80, where an altogether novel piece of news meets the eye, for here the rival is described as a poetical contemporary, who has better succeeded in panegyriizing the lady. So many bards celebrated so many obdurate or inconstant damsels at this time, that identification might prove impossible, nor could we suffer ourselves to be guided by the sonneteer's acknowledgment of the superior genius of his opponent. At any rate he was a verse-writer. For how can we otherwise translate into plain prose the following lines?—

“O, how I faint, when I of you do write,
 Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,
 And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
 To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!
 But since your worth (wide as the ocean is)
 The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
 My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
 On your broad main doth wilfully appear—”

In 1596 Bartholomew Griffin published *Fidessa, more Chaste than Kind*, in which he borrowed passages from *Venus and Adonis* and elsewhere. But his sonnets, like those of Shakespear, may have been in existence before they were printed, and the more famous writer, who here poses as the humbler one *poeticâ licentiâ*, may have been unaware that Griffin was his debtor.

I submit for consideration these points in default of any better solution: (1.) Griffin was not only a Warwickshire man, but appears to have belonged to a place so near to Stratford as Coventry; (2.) He knew the ancient family of Essex at Lambourn, in Berkshire, 46 miles from London; (3.) He had doubtless heard of his countryman's fame as a poet, for there is evidence that he had more than had *Venus and Adonis* under his eyes; (4.) Shakespear's 80th Sonnet suggests his acquaintance with the literary gifts of a contemporary, who had been more successful than him in ingratiating himself with a common lady friend at a distance from London, yet at one accessible on horseback, even if not without fatigue. I merely ask: Did *Fidessa* dwell at Lambourn, and had Shakespear met her there or elsewhere? If she relented, and married Griffin, his nuptial state was of brief duration, for his wife (whoever she was—her name was Katharine) became a widow in 1602.

No. 107, which is elsewhere quoted at length, has not exhausted the strangely elaborate picture of devotion, discontent, almost despair, and indeed Nos. 97 and 98 permit us to judge, so far as we may judge at all from such witnesses, that the poet has not revisited his married friend, nor the latter him, and that the two continue to live at a distance sufficient to make a meeting difficult. But No. 107, just cited, goes farther, as it embodies a tolerably straightforward and distinct reference to the change of dynasty in 1603.

The 127th and 144th of the series present the aspect of being readable side by side:—

"In the old age black was not counted fair,
 Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
 But now is black beauty's successive heir,
 And beauty slander'd with a bastard shame:
 For since each hand hath put on nature's power,
 Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face,
 Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy hour,
 But is profan'd, if not lives in disgrace.
 Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
 Her eyes so suited; and they mourners seem
 At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
 Slandering creation with a false esteem:
 Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
 That every tongue says, beauty should look so"

"Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
 Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
 The better angel is a man right fair,
 The worse spirit a woman colour'd ill.
 To win me soon to hell my female evil
 Tempteth my better angel from my side,
 And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
 Wounding his purity with her foul pride.
 And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,
 Suspect I may, yet not directly tell:
 But being both from me, both to each friend,
 I guess one angel in another's heil.
 Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
 Till my bad angel fire my good one out."

So far as any sense is capable of being extracted from such wild and vague utterances, which bespeak early composition and an undisciplined and immature taste, the marriage of the lady has proved in the writer's opinion inauspicious alike for her husband and for him. She is a person of dark complexion and of such a type of beauty as was not formerly admired, and there is the danger, lest she should by her conduct or disposition shorten her partner's days.

It is known that so early as 1599-1600 a play had been accepted by Philip Henslowe, entitled *The Spanish Moor's Tragedy*; it was the composite work of three contemporary dramatists, Decker, Haughton, and Day; but nothing is positively ascertained

about its history beyond the hypothesis that it was identical with a piece published in 1657 under the title of *Lust's Dominion, Or, The Lascivious Queen*, when it was attributed to Marlowe. There was a prevalent feeling about the time, when the two above-printed sonnets were written, that a certain attraction resided in a swarthy hue and dark eyes, nor was it out of favour in 1604, when Jonson presented at Court his *Masque of Blackness*, where Niger is made to say :—

“To do a kind and careful father's part,
 In satisfying every pensive heart
 Of these my daughters, my most lovéd birth :
 Who, though they were the first-form'd dames of earth,*
 And in whose sparkling and refulgent eyes
 The glorious sun did still delight to rise;
 Though he, the best judge and most formal cause
 Of all dame's beauties, in their firm hues draws
 Signs of his fervent'st love; and thereby shows
 That in their black the perfect'st beauty grows—”

The speaker appears, so far as the context allows any clear interpretation, to say that a prejudice against blackness arose, but was eventually overcome. But the whole composition is barely intelligible; the quotation has no farther value than the clue which it furnishes to the claim of dark beauties at this period to a share of admiration; and one at least took captive the heart of the man-friend—a person of the same rank as the writer—in the passages, which I have transcribed. Blackness, however, before the conclusion of the masque, cedes the first place to Beauty; and in 1607—8 Jonson prepared as a sequel his *Masque of Beauty*. In *Othello* Shakespear, some time after, reversed the picture, and portrayed the supposed Moor as in love with Desdemona. It is immaterial to the argument that Othello was probably not a man of colour, nor the heroine, if she was a Venetian, a blonde, unless she was a person of foreign origin, a Georgian or Circassian, and therefore not a person whom a man of Othello's rank would seek

* ? rather, “form'd of dame earth.”

in marriage. The antithesis is the poet's, and upon it—the sympathy of contrast—the drama greatly leans; and he has made it stronger even than he had likely warrant in describing the skin of the lady as “whiter than snow and smooth as monumental alabaster.”*

In *Much Ado about Nothing* Claudio makes a merit of being prepared to accept Hero, “were she an Ethiopie,” which might either bespeak him a fair man, or the play anterior to the sonnet or sonnets where dark complexions are more favourably viewed.

There is the additional consideration to be regarded, that, if Shakespear enjoyed the opportunity of seeing the *Masque of Blackness* in MS. (for it was not published till 1608), the idea of the two sonnets, which are placed together for comparison or collation, was more than possibly suggested by that work, of which the fame, as a successful and splendid court pageant, could hardly escape general notice; and I mention for what it may be worth the circumstance that, when the production in question and the *Masque of Beauty* came out in one volume, they purported to be printed for no other than Thomas Thorpe. Should it have been the case that the allusions to Blackness fell under the eye of Shakespear, before he wrote the sonnets numbered 127 and 144, there is, on the one hand, a new, if a very slight, illustrative point, and, on the other, a farther extension of the period, over which the collection spread itself, before it was put into type.

Shakespear was certainly not frugal in his use of poetical license. In the *Merchant of Venice* he had already made the Prince of Morocco a character and one of the suitors of Portia; he attributes to him fabulous exploits in the field of battle; and, which is more to my purpose, he makes him an apologist for his complexion—“the shadowed livery of the burnished sun.” But

* Webster may have derived the title of his *White Devil*, 1612, from the tract entitled: “The Wandering Jew telling Fortunes to Englishmen,” 1609, or from one of Thomas Adams's Sermons; possibly he pictured Vittoria Corombona with an alabaster skin.

in pleading for the equal quality of the blood beneath the sable skin, the poet went farther than the praise or defence of dark women of his own nationality, and rather evinced that generosity of sentiment, which expressed itself through Hamlet, Shylock, and other characters, in reproof of certain narrow insular prejudices. At the same time the virtue of contraries was ever present to the artist, and he could not resist the temptation of drawing into service the Æthiopian's teeth and the bright jewel hanging at the Æthiop's ear. In the *Winter's Tale*, Act ii., scene 1, there is a return, however, to the question of dark beauty in the passage: "yet black brows, they say, become some women best—" The topic certainly laid strong hold of the writer, and manifests him as a close observer of the sex—which we need not question.

The member of the group just preceding the 144th is partly occupied by a domestic reminiscence of Stratford in the youth of the writer—perhaps in his earliest married life:—

"Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch
One of her feather'd creatures broke away,
Sets down her babe, and makes all swift despatch
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay;
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase" . . .

and the thought descends to this anti-climax:—

"So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,
Whilst I thy babe chase thee afar behind;
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to us,
And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind:
So will I pray that thou mayst have thy Will,
If thou turn back, and my loud crying still."

An extract from No. 152, and a word upon the lines, bring my commentary, so far as any recognizable biographical value in the *Sonnets* goes, nearly to an end:—

"In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing;
In act thy bed-vow broken, and new faith torn,
In vowing new hate after new love bearing—"

The closing couplet of No. 151 is :—

“No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her love, for whose dear love I rise and fall.”

The two passages are in immediate juxtaposition ; the second in order assuredly refers to a woman, and the first may do so, while the previous stanzas wear the aspect of applying to the man friend.

The whole is a tiresome and tantalizing rigmarole, much of the verse as poetry and even as rhythm of the poorest quality, and the arrangement defective, yet incapable of rectification by any editor, owing to the piecemeal fashion in which the contents of the printed volume accumulated during many long years.

The self-depreciatory and hypochondriacal temperament, which colours the Sonnets, and points in one or two places to death or even suicide as a climax to a blighted and disconsolate life, was surely not an absolute invention. Was it not prompted and justified by unhappy domestic conditions and an enforced severance from all, who should have been nearest and dearest ? In Montaigne, Shakespear might have met, as I have shown, with matter for both sides of the argument, as they are delivered by Hamlet himself and in *Measure for Measure* by Claudio. These opinions belong to the period comprised between the production of those two pieces—to 1602-4 or thereabout. The French writer regarded the closing scene more philosophically than his English follower; and a careful perusal of the passages in the plays satisfies me that our poet was haunted during many years by speculations on the question of self-murder and its spiritual bearing. It may be of service to place his remarks in juxtaposition, and invite a comparison between them and his utterances in the Sonnets :—

<p><i>Hamlet</i> (1602) Act iii., Sc. 1. “<i>Ham.</i> To be, or not to be, that is the question; Whether 't is nobler in the mind to suffer</p>	<p><i>Measure for Measure</i> (1604), Act iii. Sc. 1. “<i>Claud.</i> Ay! but to die, and go we know not where; To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;</p>
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The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,	This sensible warm motion to become
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,	A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
And by opposing end them?—to die, —to sleep	To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice:
No more	To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,	And blown with restless violence round about
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,	The pendent world, or to be worse than worst
Must give us pause; there's the respect, That makes calamity of so long life: For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,	Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
When he himself might his quietus make	Imagine howling—'t is too horrible. The weariest and most loathed worldly
With a bare bodkin ?	life,
But that the dread of something after death,	That age, ache, penury, and imprison- ment,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn	Can lay on nature, is a paradise To what we fear of death."
No traveller returns, puzzles the will; And makes us rather bear those ills we have,	
Than fly to others that we know not of?	
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all—"	

Again and again Shakespear reverts to the topic and the pain; and we may make what allowance we please for his acute intellectual sensibility, and for poetical or dramatic license, without shaking the conviction that in these several indirect records there is an undercurrent of autobiography, just as there is in the analogous confessions of faith on the part of Montaigne. Treating the Sonnets as a group of stanzas printed without critical decorum, and perhaps even left in a state not admitting lucid and consecutive arrangement, there seems to be warrant for turning the material there discoverable and select passages in the Plays to a biographical account for the purpose of shedding light on that

portion of the life of Shakespear, which intervened between his departure from Stratford about 1587 and his comparative emergence from obscurity in his private relations about 1609—a period of two and twenty years, during which the domestic annals are almost a blank.

Two of the number, which lie far apart in the received and indeed sole text, which is not an authorized one to the extent that the first quartos of the plays are so, as of the precise circumstances, under which it found its way to the press we know absolutely nothing, deal with a cognate subject—a contrast between the man of middle age and one his junior, whom he apparently employs as a foil. There are those, who identify with the latter the young Earl of Pembroke, a licentious young man about town, and detect an exhortation to induce him to marry, in order to transmit his type to posterity. I lack such penetrating force, looking at all the circumstances, nor would the Earl of Southampton answer the postulates of the case much better. Below are the two sonnets side by side, the few words in italics being departures from the usual readings on grounds stated elsewhere* :—

II.

LXXIII.

<p>“When forty winters <i>have besieg’d</i> thy brow, And <i>dug</i> deep trenches in thy beauty’s field, Thy youth’s proud livery, so gaz’d on now, Will be a tatter’d weed, of small worth held: Then being ask’d, where all thy beauty lies, Where all the treasure of thy lusty days, To say, within thy own deep-sunken eyes, Were an all-eating shame and thrift- less praise.</p>	<p>“That time of year thou may’st in me behold, When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang Upon those boughs, which shake against the cold, Bare ruin’d choirs, where late the sweet birds sang. In me thou see’st the twilight of such day As after sunset fadeth in the west, Which by and by black night doth take away Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest. In me thou see’st the glowing of such [fire,</p>
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* See Notes.

How much more praise deserv'd thy beauty's ease,	That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
If thou could'st answer—"This fair child of mine,	As the deathbed, whereon it must expire,
Shall sum my count, and make my <i>eld</i> excuse—"	Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
Proving his beauty by succession thine.	This thou perceiv'st which makes thy love more strong,
This were to be new-made, when thou art old,	To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.
And see thy blood warm, when thou feel'st it cold."	

The canon in pastoral poetry of all ages and countries, which licenses the fictitious assumption of years without ostensible motive or benefit in one man paying an artificial courtship to another assuredly does not apply here. Is it reasonable to seek or accept any explanation except or beyond the superficial one? Is it necessary? These exercises may be partly at least ascribed to a stage in the life of Shakespeare, when he had reached his prime; in 1594 he was thirty; some of the sonnets—one almost certainly—were composed as late as 1603, when he was thirty-nine, and there is no particular hazard—the order in the book being untrustworthy—nay, false—in setting down this pair of stanzas to the very year, when the forty winters had done their work, and had wrought more than average havoc on a system, worn by incessant intellectual labour—"sicklied over with the pale cast of thought."* The aspect of the Droeshout portrait conveys the impression of a man, who had grown prematurely old.

Henry Chettle, son of Robert Chettle, of the London Dyers' Guild, was an eminent and successful dramatist and poet, and at one period of his life—about 1590—a printer. He was one of

* Napoléon, whose career was almost exactly of equal duration with that of Shakespeare, exhausted his physical energy prematurely. He once said, that a man could not at forty do what he had done at thirty. It was of him and Byron that Macaulay observed that, at a time of life, when other men had scarcely completed their education, they had risen to the height of power and fame. So it was with our poet and, save the mark! in a greater degree.

those, who spoke kindly and fairly of Shakespear at the outset of his literary career, and vindicated him from the attack of Greene. It may be a perfectly fanciful notion; but I am inclined to associate with a highly probable acquaintance between Shakespear and Chettle the following passage in the 111th Sonnet:—

“Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer’s hand—”

Henslowe the manager was also by original calling a dyer; and it is scarcely possible that Shakespear and he were not well known to each other, though not immediately associated in business. Chettle ranged himself, it seems, on the side of the greater poet’s supporters and admirers, and if he ever resorted to the language of reproof, it was in a gentle way, when he blamed his contemporary in 1603 in not writing an elegy on Elizabeth in requital of the good offices of the queen toward him—good offices, of which one would be glad to hear more. I do not even believe that the lines in the *Merry Wives*, referring to his sovereign, were really written by him; if they were, they are the worst, which he ever composed, and perhaps for the very reason, that such tributes were against the grain. Anne Page delivers them in the character of the *Fairy Queen*. They are not in the 4^o of 1602.

On the whole, I have won myself with facility over to the conclusion, after considering all the evidence at my command, that, while Shakespear unquestionably had in his mind, as he penned the Sonnets at intervals, persons, events, and passages in other writers of the same class of composition, there is no precise or intentional personality from beginning to end, if we except the apparent allusion to the death of Elizabeth and the Stuart succession in No. 107. The stanzas are nothing more than a trophy of luxuriant and wayward fancy and a reflex of slight *prima stamina* in actual life elaborated—not always with judgment and taste—too often coarsely and carelessly. The *Lover’s Complaint* and portions of the *Passionate Pilgrim* might just as well in substance have

made part of the series; they are equally incoherent and generic; and in the *Pilgrim* there is a stanza, which might have dropped out of *Venus and Adonis*.

The method pursued by Shakespear in the structure and costume of his Sonnets and of certain cognate productions presents no peculiarity. They simply follow the precedent set by the earliest and most celebrated authors of these privileged compositions. There is precisely the same empirical affectation of personality, the same studied minuteness of description, the same pathetic or engaging story of perjured love or passionate despair. We encounter all the emotions, of which our nature is susceptible, depicted in all their verisimilitude, vividness, and force. There is a groundwork of real circumstances connected or detached, which are to the writer somewhat what to an artist is a sketch or a series of sketches for a painting; and for the rest he is responsible. He fabricates an artificial tissue, according to his plan and power, gradually under temporary or fluctuating sensations, or by one sustained effort possibly under one; and in his person the world usually has and loses the sole trustworthy exponent of the mûsaic of fact and fable. The Shakespear bequest strikes me as falling under the first category. A great deal has been said on the nature of the Elizabethan sonnet and its continental counterpart; but no one has put the matter so sensibly and so pithily as the author of one of the long series—Dr. Giles Fletcher, who says, in the preface to his *Licia* (1593): “a man may write of love, and not be in love, as well as of husbandry, and not go to the plough, or of witches and be none, or of holiness and be profane.” Shakespear’s own countryman, however, and contemporary, Drayton, accentuates the true character of his book of sonnets in another and more direct way; for he expressly confers on it or on his mistress the name of *Idea*, which is neither more nor less than an admission, that the verses were of a fanciful and romantic texture. Unlike Shakespear, Drayton made haste to bring his work of this class before the public; it was printed in 1593; and as his personal friendship,

with the greater poet is a matter of record, his volume may be thought to deserve a high place among those, which, if they did not exactly serve as models, at least suggested an experiment in that style of composition—one serviceable enough within rational limits, especially in the absence of more explicit witnesses. We may use the material; but we should not strain too far its import.

Without going so far back, however, as the sixteenth century, let us take the case of Tennyson's *Maud*, than which a stranger and more incoherent rhapsody was probably never composed. To affirm that the stanzas reflect the genuine sentiments of the writer may be more or less hazardous; but it is totally out of the question to believe that they tell an authentic and connected story, and as with Shakespear's Sonnets and certain of his miscellaneous lyrics in the *Pilgrim* and *Love's Martyr*, the constituent parts of *Maud* are susceptible of rearrangement or redistribution at pleasure. In fact, the modern poet imported bodily into a reprint a copy of verses which he had originally written for a different purpose, and they do not strike one as more heterogeneous and discursive than much of the rest.

I adduce this recent and familiar example to illustrate the prevailing infidelity of the entire amatory and sentimental school of verse, which had its rise among the classics, but was more immediately indebted to renascent Italy; and such a view is fortified by the transparent plagiarisms of every description one from the other, and by the ingenuous avowal of one or two of their motives and meaning. These specious compositions resemble the prose novel, which delineates character, as they portray passions both alike more or less insincere and imaginary; they were in the main poetical exertions, breathing artificial or assumed emotions; and such were the sonnets of Shakespear himself—the offspring of a labouring and teeming fancy, happily equal to grander efforts in another field.

No real key is forthcoming to the Man and Woman shadowed out in the series. I fail to appreciate the worth and weight of the

Fitton theory. But there may have been some temporary amour belonging to the dark period between 1587 and 1603, on which the stanzas or sonnets more immediately portraying this passion and grief must be taken to be a fantastic and hyperbolical superstructure. The nature of Shakespear was undoubtedly emotional, and his position a trying one during all that time. We owe to the twofold agency some of the scandal, which makes part of the *Ana* and of some of the biographies, including the foolish Davenant gossip. The latter is independent of the Sonnets, for the poet did not know the family till 1604 or 1605, nor was their intercourse, I should judge, ever tainted by any irregularity. On the contrary, the character, which has been transmitted to us of John Davenant and his wife, and the touching anecdote, which Aubrey preserves of the boyish attachment of their other son Robert to Shakespear, unite in my judgment to justify us in placing the relations on a footing of the purest and most cordial friendship. The Davenants maintained and improved their social position, and were connected (including Aubrey's personal acquaintance in later life, "Parson Robert") with the university and the Church. That which helps to make against the story is the circumstance, that William was the eldest, born in February, 1605-6, within two years of the poet's first introduction, that there were several other children, and that the father and mother remained to the last on affectionate terms.

So we have to dismiss the persons of the play—those, whose proceedings and fortunes illumine the Sonnets, when we have light vouchsafed to us to perceive the truth. Seriously speaking, how wholesomely and at the same time suggestively different from the alleged covert portraiture of individuals and incidents there is that apostrophe to Essex, in the unfulfilled expectation of his triumphal return from Ireland with Southampton in 1599, in *Henry V.*:—

"Were now the general of our gracious empress,
As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
How many would this peaceful city quit
To welcome him !—"

CHAPTER XV.

The Baconian Heresy. Shakespear's Plays (not his Poems) the reputed work of Francis Bacon, lawyer, philosopher, and essayist? Absence of any contemporary or early testimony in support of the claim of Bacon as a playwright, Indefeasible title of Shakespear to his own productions. Involuntary evidence of Robert Greene in 1592 to the eminence of Shakespear at that time as a dramatist. The likenesses of the poet and the tributes to his genius by contemporaries and intimate friends. Parallel calendar of the literary careers of the two men. Vast difference in their antecedents and surroundings. Possibility, rather than probability, of the concern of Bacon in some of the English historical plays in their first sketches. Remarks on the group or sequence of Histories. Sketch of the earlier life of Bacon. His ample leisure during many years. His versatility of talent not peculiar. The style of Bacon academical and hard both in the Essays and in his quasi-dramatic efforts for performances at the Inns of Court. Poverty of his acknowledged verses. Bacon connected with representations at the Inns from 1587 to 1613. Uniform un-Shakespearian character of the entire body of these compositions. The cryptogram a not uncommon vehicle for concealment in the days of Bacon. Its presumed origin. Dismissal of the theory.

A FEW years since more than the literary world was startled by the alleged discovery of grounds, on which the Plays, not the Poems, were ascribable to another. The claim advanced proceeded on purely internal indications, yet the plea sought corroboration from certain obvious circumstances belonging to the personality of the hitherto assumed author. It was pointed out—not for the first time—that on the one hand Shakespear was ostensibly an uneducated man, the son of uneducated parents, that next to nothing was preserved of his life and movements, and that, while his existence was proved, and it was not denied that he had published certain poems and sonnets, connecting him with one or more distinguished personages, he was simply incapable of composing the dramas, which had so far passed under his name

without doubt or challenge. On the contrary, this new school contended that more than one indication contributed to identify with these dramatic productions—if not, forsooth, with a moiety of all those written about the same time—no less a personage than Francis Bacon, who had left, it was asserted and even actually demonstrated, in a then not unfrequent form, in a cryptogram, the absolute proof of his responsibility for the plays, or at any rate, certain of them, ascribed to Shakespear, and habitually cited as his by his own contemporaries, by foreign adapters or admirers at or near the age itself, and by each succeeding one.

This unparalleled heresy, which proposes to deprive the country of one of its two greatest men,* found a degree of support and adherence, chiefly in the United States, not very creditable to the parties concerned, and manifestly due to the failure, more natural perhaps abroad than on English ground, to grasp all the facts, and to take a comprehensive view of the question; and the Baconian parentage of Shakespear's Plays—not, let us remember, his Lyrics—became at all events a debateable theme at home and across the Atlantic, a more or less diffused creed, on which I understand that hundreds of books and pamphlets have already been written. Yet it is safe to affirm that the title of Shakespear to his splendid literary estate, Plays and Poems alike, is perfectly unimpaired.

It will enter to some general extent into my plan to attempt to shew that (1) Bacon could not have written the Plays, or any of the Plays, as Shakespear left them; (2) that Shakespear did write them, as we at present possess them; and (3) that the Baconian theory may nevertheless have some measure of verisimilitude, yet in a very different way. If my contention or hypothesis should be correct, its value ought to be considerable.

The knowledge by report that Bacon had written some kind

* How singular it appears that in one era three such profound thinkers as Montaigne, Bacon, and Shakespear should have lived side by side, as it were, each so supreme in his way, and each so different in his origin and surrounding influences.

of poetry is more than two centuries of age. John Aubrey, about sixty years after the death of Bacon, says*: His Lordship was a good Poet, *but conceal'd* [the italics are the present writer's], as appeared by his Letters. See excellent verses of his Lordship's which Mr. Farnaby translated into Greeke, and printed both in his *Ανθολογια*, &c.

“ The world's a bubble, and the life of man,
Less than a span, &c.”

Aubrey was most assuredly unaware, that the subject of his notice had done more than indulge his fancy, like other serious writers, in occasional efforts of a lighter and different character. He does not, I submit, offer the least suggestion, that there was a current belief at that time as to Bacon having penned any important or distinct contributions to the national drama or even to undramatic poetry, for, had he cited the same author's partial version of the *Psalms*, which was perhaps unknown to him, he could barely have pretended that it was much more meritorious than the verses on a Bubble—possibly not so good. At any occult key to dramatic labours of any kind Aubrey does not remotely hint.

Not only in Shakespear's life-time were the Plays and Poems equally published as his; but when he was no more, and while Bacon yet survived, they similarly continued to be so; and the First Folio almost ostentatiously sets forth the authorship of Shakespear, as the *Lear* of 1608 and the *Sonnets* of 1609 had previously done. All these appropriations were made, not by Shakespear, but by the booksellers under the influence of common knowledge; and in the collective editions of the Plays men, who had been personally intimate with the poet, who had acted in these compositions, when they were brought on the stage, who enjoyed the opportunity far better than we do of hearing reports and rumours about the pieces and their origin, who might even have beheld their friend with his pen in his hand, with the unfinished manuscript before him, attested his exclusive claim within their information to the work.

* Aubrey's Letters, &c., ed. Bliss, ii., 224.

There is at least no dispute that a William Shakespear—only one out of two or three of similiar name—lived between certain dates, published certain approved poems, was on friendly terms not only with other literary men, but with persons of rank and distinction, who were flattered by his compliments, and sensible of his power; and that he had been at a remarkably early stage of his professional career viewed by a certain coterie with more than sufficient jealousy and dislike to have led to the speedy exposure of his false assumption of undue credit, had there been such a matter within their cognizance. He was, as we all are aware, accused by Greene, as the spokesman of himself and others, of having dishonestly misappropriated their material, or, in the precise language of the complainants, of “having beautified himself with their feathers.”

The charge became public property in 1592 by the issue of Robert Greene’s *Groat’sworth of Wit*; but the feeling had rankled in the bosoms of the writer of the pamphlet and his immediate set some time, we may be almost sure, before it found vent in type. Greene rightly or wrongly upbraided *Shake-scene* or *Johannes Factotum* with nefarious practices, or, if his arraignment may be translated into other words, he and some about him were becoming sensible of the rise of a new master and a new theatrical school, which were to eclipse the existing system; and if it be the fact that Gabriel Harvey, in his *Four Letters and Certain Sonnets*, apparently published a little before the *Groat’sworth of Wit*, meant Shakespear, where he alludes, among “springing wits,” “singularly, to one, whom I salute with a hundred blessings,” the irritation was naturally aggravated. To be assailed by Greene was an *ipso facto* title to the goodwill of Harvey. For the immediate purpose, the hostility of Greene is valuable, because it seems to intimate that he had no justification whatever for alleging, that Shakespear was guilty of a graver offence than carrying the authorized revision of other men’s work, farther than had been customary—so far perhaps now; and then as to overlay and obliterate the First Sketch;

nor would Shakespear have incurred the animosity of his fellow-playwrights, had he limited himself to manuscripts submitted to the managers by outsiders and amateurs. He presumed to trespass, of course with the concurrence of proprietors, on higher ground, and to imply practically that he could outdo Greene and his friends. On that point the world has long come to a conclusion; but the author of the *Groat'sworth of Wit* performed, as it has happened, yeoman service in satisfying us for ever that in 1592 William Shakespear was already by the acknowledgement of a circle, in which we may include Peele and Marlowe, if not Munday, their superior as a dramatist, even if his performances were more or less under obligations to their *prima stamina*.

The portrait accompanying the First Folio, of which a reduced copy occurs in the Poems of 1640, was apparently derived, not from the bust, but from a painting, now in the Memorial Gallery at Stratford. But the main and solid point is this: that the William Shakespear interred at Stratford, and lying beneath the monument in the chancel there, and the William Shakespear whose name is so conspicuous on the title of the 1623 volume, were then, and until lately by nearly all, accepted by common assent as one and the same.

Gerard Johnson or Jansen the Dutch sculptor, to whom the bust is ascribed, lived in the vicinity of the Globe theatre in Southwark; but the dates are not given. If he had opportunities of meeting the poet, while the latter was a resident in the same neighbourhood, the reliance on the fidelity of the likeness and the identity of the original should be more implicit, and the artist might be more confidently called as a witness in the suit of *Shakespear v. Bacon*.

The bust, in the sophisticated condition, to which it has been reduced by successive restorers in the past, is not easily traced to any individual source. It had been already placed in the church, when the first folio edition of the Plays, with the portrait by Droeshout was published; and as the widow of the poet survived

till August, 1623, she may have had an opportunity of beholding that monument in its pristine freshness. Of all the likenesses, which have descended to us, or have been laid before us, the Cornelius Jansen and Chandos paintings appear to be the only ones in keeping with the time; but they, with the coarse Droeshout effigy and the yet more unsatisfying bust, potently combine to relieve Francis Bacon from the uncomfortable position of having written productions so foreign to his genius.

Shakespear-Baconism, originally a tender and perishable home-sprung seedling, was transplanted into a foreign soil, and gained an almost tropical luxuriance. An American atmosphere and a distant contemplation have evidently done something for the cause and the cry. It is a possibility that some of these adventurers, if they were to settle down for a season at Stratford and purchase Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines* or even (which is much the same thing—not quite so good) Mr. Lee's *Life*, and digest the contents, they might grow disposed to reconsider their signally precipitate and unwise verdict. For an acceptance or rejection of the proposition, that Shakespear comprised in his schedule of more or less rewritten plays some in a transitional state sketched with or without his knowledge by Bacon, and placed in his hands in the customary way through a third party, does not substantially affect the central argument, that the Plays of Shakespear are by Shakespear.

As the countrymen of the Warwickshire bard have such a serried phalanx of resolute enthusiasts ranged in battle-array against them on this issue, there may be no harm in drawing up for reference and comparison a view of the respective occupations of the two men during the continuance of their literary labours. There is said to be always a danger in underrating adversaries, and we must do our utmost to lay this ungentle ghost, lest others should be emboldened by his example. Let us take these two almost contemporary biographies in outline from starting-point to close:—

CALENDAR OF BIOGRAPHICAL PARALLELISMS.

Bacon (1561-1626).

1. Born in London, Jan. 22, 1561, son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper, and of the learned Anne Cooke.

2. Sent to the University of Cambridge, on Oct. 13, 1574.

3. Leaves Cambridge to go to Paris, 1577, dissatisfied with academical methods, studies statistics and diplomacy, and writes a piece *On the State of Europe*.

4. Recalled to England by the sudden death of his father, 1580.

5. Engages in legal studies, tries to obtain official employment, writes pamphlets on current affairs. A very obscure epoch, 1580-5.

6. Becomes Counsel Extraordinary to the Queen, 1590. Forms a friendship with the Earl of Essex, who makes him a present of Twickenham Park, 1594.

7. Becomes member of Parliament for Middlesex, 1595. Continues to be in pecuniary straits, and is once arrested for debt. Composes masques and other occasional pieces of a dry and starched character, writes his essays in Latin, and afterwards translates them into English and publishes them, 1597.

8. Writes by royal command the justification of the death of Essex, 1601. Marries the daughter of a London Alderman. Knighted by James I., 1603. Counsel to the Crown, 1604.

Shakespear (1564-1616).

1. Born at Stratford, April 22-3, 1564, son of John Shakespear and his wife, daughter of Robert Arden, persons of yeoman rank.

2. Educated at Stratford Grammar School, one of the best in England.

3. Pursues employment under his father, acquires a knowledge of rural life, probably witnesses exhibitions of travelling actors.

4. Visits London as a boy, and meets the Burbages, Tarlton, &c., 1575-80.

5. Leaves Stratford, and comes up to London, assists Burbage at his hostelry in Shoreditch. Enjoys opportunities of seeing the performances at his theatre, 1586-8.

6. Begins to write for the stage as a corrector of other men's plays. Is assailed by Robert Greene (1592) as a dangerous rival to himself and others. Publishes *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* (1593-4).

7. Produces *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II.*, *Richard III.*, &c., 1594-7. Loses his only son, 1596. Presumed separation from his wife.

8. Purchases New Place, 1597. Continues to bring out year by year his great dramatic masterpieces. A scene from *Richard II.*, performed in the streets and other public places without his avowed cognizance by the partizans of Essex, 1601.

9. Is still occupied, amid professional work, in literary labours. Publishes in 1605 his *Advancement of Learning*.

10. Pursues his philosophical researches *pari passu* with his political functions, 1605-09. Acquires habits of increased extravagance.

11. Attorney-General, 1613. Periodical reprints of the *Essays*. His expensive habits and love of splendour impoverish and compromise him. The man of genius and of the world, but not of business.

12. Rises in estimation as a lawyer and a philosophical and moral writer. His *Essays* are translated into Italian, 1618. Becomes Lord Keeper (1617), Regent during the absence of the King in Scotland (1617), Lord Chancellor and Baron Verulam (1619), and Viscount St. Alban (1620). The *Novum Organon* completed and printed (1620). The *History of Henry VII.* published, 1622. First complete edition of the *Essays* appears, 1625, apparently seen through the press by the author. Dies in embarrassed circumstances, 1626.

9. Writes at short notice, for presentment before the Queen, the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1602. *Hamlet* produced, 1602. Shakespear receives a magnificent eulogy from Jonson in the *Poetaster*, 1602.

10. Shakespear's *Sonnets*, written at intervals during many years, are published by the finder of the MS. or papers, 1609. The dramatic series proceeds. Shakespear accumulates property. New Place let to T. Greene.

11. Shakespear retires from London and parts with his theatrical interests, 1611-12. Buys a house and appurtenances in Blackfriars as an investment, 1613, barring dower to his wife. The man of genius and business.

12. At or near Stratford. Health fails. Makes his will, bequeathing most part of his estate to the Halls. His wife receives practically nothing. Dies, April—May, 1616, leaving a considerable estate in land, tithes, and money.

In the illustrious Philosopher and Essayist we conceive that we realize a man of a totally distinct type. His birth was distinguished; on his father's and mother's side he had the promise of high mental gifts, and more than fulfilled it; the road to greatness was opened to him by all the advantages, which rank, influence, and wealth are capable of conferring; he gradually developed to the view of the world a commanding intellect, boundless ambition, an inextinguishable thirst for knowledge, and a literary aptitude at

once of the profoundest and of the most multifarious reach. His versatility was almost a conceit. He seemed to aim at becoming the second Universal Doctor.

When one regards the chronological sequence or succession even of those works, which he lived to publish, their lofty aim, their varied character, and their laborious execution, one wonders in what manner Bacon contrived to spare from his almost incessant professional engagements leisure to commit to writing, when they had assumed a tangible form in his mind, this vast mass of matured and condensed thought. We become aware that he employed secretaries and amanuenses, and even that he maintained at one time a scrivener's establishment to facilitate the production of fair copies—probably of any sort of manuscript matter, legal or literary, in hand. Yet the personal toil, where the topic was intricate and abstruse, must have been immense, and it was perhaps saved from being quite insupportable by what we know of the legible character of the author's writing—the Italian, not the Court, style. By his direct instrumentality or by the offices of editors, especially Rawley, most part of what he did is laid before us; but it is impossible to be assured that we have all. Rawley appears to have made himself well acquainted with the literary labours of his employer. He does not allude to his poetical efforts, nor did he deem the translation of the Psalms, the product of a sick chamber toward the close, as worth reprinting. He cannot have failed to have at least heard of it.

In connection with the clear need for clerical assistance, apart from the question of a concern in current dramatic literature, it is a matter of notoriety, that the scrivener was called into service at this time for every species of transcript, and that numerous manuscript copies of old plays and poems exist in this shape, including two or three of the Latin tragedy of *Richard III*. It was an expedient for saving time or for securing accuracy.

The tradition in the time of Charles II. was, according to Edward Ravenscroft the dramatist, that *Titus Andronicus* was

brought to the theatre "by a private author," and improved by Shakespear, before it was put on the stage, where it enjoyed a wide and long popularity. My personal view is that the play was an unfinished one of Marlowe, and that the holder was a middleman, who had obtained possession of it after the death of the poet. But the alleged process by which it fell into the hands of its reviser points a certain moral, which is, that if this was a regular and periodical experience, other "private authors" may have taken the same course with their dramatic essays which they did not care to print, and which in their actual form were unsuitable for representation; and I harbour the opinion—an empirical and diffident one, I allow—that, not such a piece as *Titus Andronicus*, but such as the first drafts of *Henry IV.*, *Henry V.*, and *Henry VI.* were not improbably of Baconian origin—far more probably, indeed, than from the pens usually named in connection with them, and that these products of a man of genius, wholly destitute of theatrical experience beyond such as sufficed to set forth a Court or Gray's Inn pageant, were laid before the more practical artist even without a clue to the authorship, in a scrivener's transcript.

This is obviously nothing more than a suggestion, which defers to the dark and passing remark of Aubrey, a witness not to be too indiscriminately dismissed, that Bacon was a good poet, and concealed his labours in that direction, and not to the unsound, and indeed puerile, dogma, that he concealed them under the *nom-de-plume* of William Shakespear, and even compiled a book called the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and used the *alias* of Robert Burton. The advocates of such a wild notion made a few converts at first, but ruined their cause—never a strong one—by seeking to prove too much. Aubrey, let us observe, does not even say that the poetry was dramatic, and Bacon has left nothing in the lyrical way to entitle him to consideration.

The present writer might not have acquiesced even so far in the indication of Aubrey, had it not struck him, that the *History of Henry VII.*, not published till 1622, was in its inception or

germ just such another lame offspring as the First Sketches of the other reigns, and was rewritten as a historical narrative at a posterior date, when the idea of bringing the subject on the stage had been abandoned by the author, or discouraged by those, to whom he conjecturally submitted his other MSS. It is fairly obvious that the most dramatic episode in a Henry VII. play would be the very one, which so largely contributes to the success of Richard III.—the Bosworth scene; and then, moreover, this part of the English Annals had been preoccupied by at least one inferior pen, before the great poet undertook it as part of his series; and this circumstance suggests a farther speculation, whether the *prima stamina* of Bacon's *Henry VII.* was one of the two ante-Shakesperian dramas on the subject. We do not know, that Bacon even wrote such a piece, nor was it, perhaps, too late for Marlowe, or the latter might have left it behind him, as he did other works, in MS.

The group of Histories, in their original rough-hewn state, and in the shape which they assumed under the hand of Shakespear, extends from Richard II. to Richard III., the two Richards beginning and closing the sequence. We must all feel that we are treading on debateable ground, so far as the First Sketches go; but, after all, the attribution of these pieces is conjectural, and there is a complete set of the prototypes, so altered, modified, and strengthened by a second pen, that the first author is not very distinctly recognizable. As Shakespear's *Richard III.* is held to have preceded his *Richard II.* in order of production—though the proof is not very clear—it may well be the fact that, when the former was completed, it was discovered that the reign of Richard II. was alone substantially required to make the dramatization of English history consecutive from Edward I.; and the annals of the country in such a shape were calculated, perhaps, to please and satisfy many, before the Duke of Marlborough pronounced his celebrated *dictum*.

The more youthful transactions of Bacon are less obscure

than those of his contemporary, mainly because he was led by his professional and political connections into a fairly plentiful correspondence with persons accustomed to preserve their papers, and from the same cause is mentioned in the correspondence and memoirs of others; and the silence of certain years is in fact due to the accidental absence of such lights. 1580-82, for instance, is an almost blank interval, during which he may have occupied his time with dramatic experiments—such as the *Conference of Pleasure*, which is analogous to the MSS. noted by Spedding under a later date (1592-95), and which that editor correctly describes as presenting “a certain affectation and rhetorical cadence.”

There was a protracted term, even down nearly to the close of the sixteenth century, however, before regular preferment arrived, when the Essayist and Philosopher was without settled occupation, and in pecuniary straits; glad to employ his versatile pen on any current question before the Government and the public; and to this epoch, if to any, we must, I think, assign desultory efforts to dramatize incidents or scenes in English history, partly suggested by visits to the playhouses, and partly so by the experiments, of which some are extant. There are indications that the composition of the historical series, commencing with *Henry IV.*, had already started in 1587, before Shakespear entered on the scene.*

What Bacon may have written of this nature we are quite authorized to conclude unfit for theatrical use; but the first drafts of *Henry IV.*, *V.*, *VI.* were possibly his, yet not even as they were originally exhibited and published, but submitted to a revising pen. If that pen was Shakespear's, we are unable to believe that he engaged in this kind of work prior to 1590; and thenceforward during some years he did little else in a dramatic direction. In 1592, when the *Groat'sworth of Wit* appeared, the entire historical series, however, had reached the First Sketch stage, and had made Greene violently indignant and angry.

* Hunter's *New Illustrations*, ii., 63.

That Bacon, situated as he was in constant and anxious expectation of legal advancement, did not venture to associate himself publicly with such performances, had they even been capable of utilization as he left them, is perfectly obvious, and, as I have suggested, his essays of this nature, if he made them, may have been among those which found their way to the theatre without any hint of their parentage—which were sent by hand in the shape of a transcript. As to elaborate concealment of his identity, I must own that I fail to perceive the slightest rational foundation for the idea; the nearest approach to a disguise of the kind was in a few early letters, where he oddly subscribes himself *B. Fra.* A scrivener's copy delivered by an anonymous bearer was surely sufficient protection for an outsider or "private person."

It may be worth while to add, in illustration of the present aspect of the matter, where a school of specialists has exhausted its ingenuity in constructing so much out of so little, that the playwrights, having omitted in their episodical History of England to treat the interval between the fall of Richard III. and the reign of Henry VIII., Bacon, occupying a wholly different position from that in which we see him before 1600, supplied the gap and the deficiency in a manner sufficiently conclusive to prove the need, which any productions, previously thrown into a dramatic form, would have had of an editor.

There was nothing very unusual in the wide range of the studies of Bacon. English scholars before his time had signalized themselves, as we are enabled to judge from the extant lists of their works, by their active interest in subjects as different in their character as in their importance; and so conspicuous a personage as Sir Thomas More, a contemporary of Bacon's father, and a fresh tradition in Bacon's own day, comes into our thoughts. If we take into our hands his *Collected Works*, 1557, a rather ponderous folio of 1600 or 1700 pages, we perceive that between its covers it embraces nearly every sort of polite learning and literary thesis, and that the drama and poetry are not overlooked.

The present writer advanced many years since the plausible suggestion, that More had a hand even in a jest-book; and he is reported to have furnished John Heywood with the plots of some of his comic interludes. Versatility was in fact a sort of cult toward the Elizabethan era; but this admission is very far from helping the Baconian theorists, inasmuch as the same individual may display a share of proficiency in many directions, yet never attain supreme excellence in more than one. In the case of Bacon, that specialism was assuredly not poetry. We read with pleasure the *Essays* and *Sylva Sylvarum*, and perhaps the *History of Henry the Seventh*, and is it not so, that we take the *Novum Organon* on trust as a new philosophical gospel, which we have yet to master? We turn with a painful sensation to the version of some of the Psalms on two accounts, the physical prostration of the translator and the poverty of the translation; and we at length conclude, that the sole redeeming feature in the small volume is the interesting inscription in an extant copy to the pious George Herbert, interesting alike from its mutually honourable terms and from the insight, which it betrays into the poetical bias of his "affectionate friend." Bacon looked up to the writer of the *Temple* as the happiest union of Divinity and Poesy.

The testimony of Aubrey, then, and the visible fruit of the Baconian muse, combine, with the estimate of poetry presumed from the appreciation of Herbert, to discourage us from imagining that the author of the *Life of Henry VII.* ever rose to higher flights in metre and fancy; and I emphasize the work just mentioned because I have speculated whether Bacon can have had any hand in the first drafts of the dramatic series devoted to the reigns of earlier English kings, of the original sources of which so little is ascertained. It is impossible to believe that he failed to attend performances at the theatres, when any piece of congenial character or striking texture was announced; we are aware how his intellectual temper led him to become an essayist in almost all branches of human learning and culture; and our "concealed

poet" may have been, under strict promise of secrecy or indeed without the knowledge of those to whom he transmitted the MS. or MSS., the author of one or more of these imperfect historical dramas, first supplied with occasional touches, and eventually recast by a second and stronger hand—stronger, at least, in this class of work, both from a loftier imaginative scope and from a keener practical instinct.

The conjecture may be, more than possibly is, baseless. But it is circumscribed in its application and bearing, and I have individually a very indifferent opinion of its value. For I cannot help seeing how, in the *Essays*, whose sententious structure would bring them nearest to the dramatic form and feeling, there is an almost total absence of consanguinity. These productions are in fact the *Sermones Fideles*, which the author terms them in the original Latin; they rise above commonplace infinitely more seldom than those of Montaigne; and they would not have sufficed to lift the name of Bacon to its acknowledged height in spite of the bitterest detraction, had he not been emphatically in philosophical, what Shakespear was in dramatic, literature, and the French master in ethics.

Some time before the entrance of Bacon at Gray's Inn—in fact, when he was still in his infancy, the English versions of the *Phænissæ* of Euripides and the *Suppositi* of Ariosto had been presented there, no doubt under the superintendence of their translators or paraphrasts, Francis Kinwelmersh and George Gascoigne. These productions, if they were seen by Shakespear, were presumably known to him only through the printed copies in the editions of Gascoigne; at any rate, he has shown an acquaintance with both in the *Winter's Tale* and the *Taming of the Shrew*. These dramas were exhibited at the Inn in 1566; but it was not till 1587 that Bacon, then a young man of six or seven and twenty, took part in an undertaking of an analogous character produced under the auspices of Kinwelmersh himself, then an elderly person, and others, and performed before the Court at Greenwich. This

was the piece usually known as *The Misfortunes of Arthur*; and Bacon was no farther concerned in it than in the preparation of the dumb-shows.

But the introduction to theatrical life was not to be limited to this comparatively humble experiment, and there are indications among certain papers preserved in a mutilated state at Northumberland House, that Bacon, some years subsequently, addressed himself to the task of executing devices for representation at Court on special occasions. These exist only in the form and to the extent, that they have been printed by Spedding;* the remainder of the MSS. copies appear to have perished in the fire at Northumberland House in 1780. Judging, however, from the salvage, these essays have no dramatic pretensions, and partake rather of the nature of addresses or themes; and they are perhaps merely of use as shewing, that the writer had a taste, amid graver and more practical studies, for the sort of literature, which may be classible as bordering on the theatrical. This employment belonged to a stage of his career, when he was still enjoying a certain amount of leisure, and when his official rank and engagements had not rendered his direct and public attention to such minor unprofessional matters inexpedient on more than one account.

In 1594, appeared the *Gray's-Inn Masque*, by Francis Davison, son of a Secretary of State, yet, like Bacon, distinguished by a keen relish for literature, and making his first mark as the composer of a quasi-dramatic piece. Davison was considerably the junior of Bacon; and it is not unreasonable to suppose, or dangerous to grant, that he imbibed from the latter, a member of the same inn and a family connection, his taste for what we may term amateur theatricals, as well as for the *belles lettres*. It is shown† that both these personages were in touch with the Sydneys of Wilton and other families, remarkable for their culture.

* *A Conference of Pleasure*, &c., 8°, 1870.

† Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody*, 1826, *prolegomena*.

Francis Davison, not long after his admission to Gray's-Inn, however, travelled abroad, and during some time we hear of him only through his correspondence with Anthony Bacon, brother of Francis; but this circumstance is immaterial, inasmuch as whatever sympathy with dramatic and literary studies the younger Davison contracted, his kinsman, fellow-student, and senior was doubtless the initiating motor, the tutelary force. In 1594 Bacon was thirty-three, his friend only nineteen or twenty. The influence in this direction, to some extent reciprocal, was fostered and sustained by the circles, in which both moved. At the same time Bacon and Davison were destined to achieve widely different careers; and the former was to find himself in a position, where it became increasingly impracticable for him to devote his time, and, which was more, to lend his name openly to dramatic performances of any kind.

It is of some, nay, of considerable, importance to become aware that Bacon did not abandon his propensity for the more academical side of dramatic composition, even when he had attained a conspicuous position as a legal adviser and officer of the Crown. For in 1613 he devised, as it was phrased in those days, a masque for presentation at one of the Inns of Court in honour of the marriage of the Lady Elizabeth Stuart, the king's daughter, to the Elector Palatine,* and this performance, which drew a large crowd of spectators, is precisely of the same quality as those earlier efforts of which I have just spoken, establishing the ostensible boundary of the power of the author in this direction—perhaps indeed the limit of his aim, if or *when* he found that his more youthful aspirations as a dramatist of the more regular type were good only as pegs or skeletons for another and more capable artist.

The employment of cyphers, which is traced from the Continent, and was an early diplomatic and political precaution at Venice, came into vogue in England, and was habitual during the Civil Troubles, and even in private communications of a delicate

* Hazlitt's *Manual of Old English Plays*, 1892, p. 150.

or compromising nature. The practice originally contemplated protection, not mystery; but the latter became in certain cases a collateral element, and assumed many arbitrary and fantastic forms, some of which, where the question has grown one of importance, have been laboriously unriddled, while others have resisted disentanglement. Less absolute in its cryptographic obscurity, yet germane in its character and object, was the Veiled Allusion and the occult signature; and these two modified and secondary types freely pervade the amatory literature and confidential correspondence of the period, which I am considering in more immediate connection with Shakespear.

A comparative study of the productions in verse of the fifteenth and succeeding century seems to reveal a change of treatment and tone, which it may not be too fanciful to ascribe to social agencies and the tendency of the line of demarcation between the classes to become narrower and less peremptory; and this circumstance is at least in some degree responsible for the necessity, which was appreciated of disguising familiar expressions of sentiment on the part of an author to a noble friend in such a manner as to be intelligible only to a certain person or a certain set of persons. There undoubtedly is in our hands a fairly considerable variety of instances of this new aspect of the relationship of men of culture to men and women of rank, carrying with it a real or supposed responsibility, as I have said, for concealing confidential or clandestine intimacies from the public eye and ear; and we owe to such a condition of affairs toward the close of the Elizabethan era the modern hypothesis touching undercurrents of significant meaning in the Sonnets, as printed in 1609.

I am capable of crediting any kind or degree of whimsicality and even absurdity in such a direction. The motives might be manifold. The aim might be playful or politic. Occasionally we are unable to discern any aim at all, as in the reputed letters of Sir Christopher Hatton to Queen Elizabeth, under the enigmatical subscription *Lydde*, where there is nothing, so far as the sense can be

made out, which might not have appeared above the real name of the writer; but in a tract of 1576 immediately relative to the affairs of the Netherlands* we meet with a strange account how “by an other Embassadour lewde and vncomely letters haue bin written vnder fancy signes of the names of Oriana, Amadis, and such vnprincely toyes . . . and howe the same rashe personage hath not bin misliked there for his so doing”—which appears equally to point to a confidential correspondence with her majesty. We come to different ground, however, and a different phase of the question, when we are invited to regard the Sonnets of Shakespear as secretly importing a great deal more than is to be gathered on the surface or from the context, so far as there is such a thing as a context; and we perceive, besides, that we approach a field of discussion, which has received, since it was first opened about seventy years since, numerous fresh contributors, with a chronic tendency to periodical recruits, each apparently more imaginative than the preceding one.

I have not dwelt very much on the Cryptogram itself, because I share the general feeling in England, that it is a pure emanation from the modern fancy, not the legacy of Bacon, not present to his mind. I believe that it is a visionary conception, which, were it allowed, might be made of universal application to anonymous or doubtful pieces of literature.

Taking any part of the prose works of Bacon as tests of treatment and style, it is impossible not to be struck by the absence of affinity with the Shakespear dramas; and if Bacon actually wrote any of the latter series—not the Comedies or the Tragedies, but the Histories, as they lie before us, one thing may be predicated of him, that he displayed a power of disguising his literary identity unattained by any other writer on record.

The Baconian doctrine is a purely modern one. It is of English origin, but of American development. If I were asked,

* *Certain Letters Wherein is set forth a Discourse of the Peace*, &c. 8°, 1576. Only two copies known.

by what agency it has been spread, I should be disposed to lay no slight stress on that unexampled absence of self-assertion on the part of Shakespear, which might have received a modifying or qualifying influence from records beyond our reach or beyond at least our present ken, but which at the same time is of a piece with the remarkable circumstance that, while so many refer to him, he refers to so few—and then merely through *dramatis personæ*, and that, living at a point of time, when the commendatory verse and the elegiac tribute were rife, he abstained from identifying himself with either, unless, which is dubious, he actually gave the poem assigned to him in *Love's Martyr*, 1601, to the Editor, and, unless, which is far more likely, he is answerable for the noteworthy lines inserted among the prolegomena to the second folio of Florio's Montaigne.

Secondly, I should plead, and with some amount of confidence, that the coeval existence in England of two individuals, more lavishly endowed with intellectual qualifications than any others of English or indeed any origin before or since, is so eminently calculated to impress observers or critics as an incredible phenomenon, that the apparent opportunity of escape from the miracle by the reduction of one of them to an *umbra* or a cat's-paw acquired a new force and a new felicity. It had always struck us as extraordinary, and almost as a problem to be explained, how the two greatest Englishmen belonged to one era, nearly to the same exact interval of years, how they lived, as it were, side by side, face to face, yet, so far as we could learn, were strangers to each other: one a poetical philosopher, the other a philosophical poet; and at length, according to some, the mystery is unravelled, the veil is rent asunder, and not Stratford, but Gorhambury, is entitled to the glory of being the First Village in the world—a Cathedral City without a Bishop—a Shrine with relics canonized by no Church—only by the voice of all educated mankind.

NOTES.

NOTES.

P. 108. *Euphemia Carril of Warrington*. This is the lady, to whom Tofte inscribes his *Laura*, 1597. At that time it may be just remarked, that Anthony Babington resided at Warrington, and exhibited his literary tastes by compiling a commonplace book of contemporary verse, dated 1596, and now in the British Museum. Four years after, he prefixed a sonnet to Bodenham's *England's Helicon*, 1600, where we find matter common to the MS.

P. 102. *Charge for seats at theatres*. The price of admission to Davenant's *First Day's Entertainment at Rutland House*, 1657, was also five shillings, and 150 persons attended; as it was a sort of private performance, there was probably only one tariff.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

If it be true, as I suspect, that this was one of the MSS. left behind him by Marlowe in the hands of the Walsinghams in 1593, it may have required sufficient emendation to induce the superintendents of the 1623 folio to regard it as mainly or wholly Shakespear's; and it is not much worse than the First Sketches of Henry IV.—V.—VI. It would be highly satisfactory to ascertain, if the 4^o of 1600 was really preceded by one of 1594, and whether the two corresponded. If so, this drama would stand in the same category as the First Sketches. Meres mentions the piece in 1598 as Shakespear's; but his testimony is not conclusive; he was a University man, although he occasionally resided in London, and was there indeed in 1597. He was a student of divinity, but does not refer to any clerical employment.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

Act i., Sc. 2. *Dialogue between Julia and Lucetta*.

Note the technical details of music. But the speakers were Italians, who might be supposed to be more conversant with these *minutiæ*.

Fr. *Mignon* is used here for *dear* in the form *minion*, which subsequently acquired a very different sense.

As regards the obligation of the poet to the *Diana* of Montemayor for the Felismena story, Shakespear may have gleaned, through his acquaintance with Lord Southampton, some knowledge of the Wilson version, yet not in time to be of use for this play.

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

Plot. Numerous analogues and prototypes have been from time to time pointed out. Of course it is an ancient idea. But see my Warton, 1871, i., 275.

A "History of Error," which reads like an earlier drama on the same lines, appears to have been exhibited at Hampton Court in 1577. See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, v. *Error*.

The phrase *comedy* or *play of errors* became proverbial. See "Meeting of Gallants at an Ordinary." 1604, &c. Comp. *Alexander & Lodwick* in *Manual*, 1892, in v.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

Hazlitt, in his *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, 1817, notices the objection offered to the youth of the hero and heroine; but indeed the poet has been true here to local costume, since he was portraying the manners of a more southern people, where women arrive at maturity earlier than among ourselves, and where, besides, it would have been treated as contrary to etiquette for the lovers to meet privately prior to the nuptials. Such interviews as thus took place were therefore apt to be clandestine.

LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST.

This play was, no doubt, written almost immediately prior to its performance before the queen, and according to the terms of the first 4^o it was, subsequently to presentation, corrected and augmented by the author—how and to what extent we cannot tell. He seems, when he wrote the passages, where Holofernes appears, to have come fresh from contact with one of the numerous preceptors to be then found in London, by no means necessarily Florio, but rather a professional school-master like Richard Mulcaster, who deemed that he had a dramatic gift, and superintended the theatrical exhibitions of the St. Paul's boys, who were known as Mulcaster's Children.

If it be so, that Shakespear revised and enlarged the drama himself, before it was handed to the printer, the circumstance is a very unusual one, since the ordinary course observed was to let the printer follow his own pleasure, and to reserve the fuller text

for a fitter opportunity, which, so far as Shakespear was concerned, did not arise in his lifetime. *Love's Labor's Lost* was acted by the King's Company in or before January, 1605.

The character of Don Adriano de Armado may have received a touch or so from an unique pamphlet of the time called the *Rodomontades of Captain Viques*, 1591, which was not, I believe, known to exist, till I met with a copy in the library of Peterborough Cathedral.

In the list of *Dramatis Personæ*, the names of Biron and Holofernes suggest the remarks (1) that, if the poet intended the Duc de Biron of the time, the portrait is a strange caricature, and if he did not, the adoption of the name of a prominent French statesman strikes one as injudicious. It is worse than the Oldcastle and Fastolfe case, for there at all events the individuals were not living; (2) that Holofernes is a name found in two earlier dramatic productions, 1556 and 1572. See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, in v.

There is no mention of any visit of the Duc de Biron of history to London prior to 1601, not long before his execution, and too late to have suggested the name to the dramatist. He was of course a conspicuous public character long before, yet hardly in the way, which the play portrays. The inconsistency culminates here in the line where the French duke is made to allude figuratively to "Love's Tyburn," as to a London locality, with which he was familiar.

Act i., Sc. 2. *The dancing horse.*

The celebrity of this famous animal long survived him; for he is referred to in a French version of Apuleius, printed at Antwerp, 8^o, 1633.

Longaville.

Why should this form be adopted? The proper and only one is *Longueville*. There is much need of improvement under this head in many places.

Act i., Sc. 2. "*Biron*. Lady, I will commend you to mine own heart."

A Gallicism. *Own* is not required, and destroys the rhythm.

Act iv., Sc. 1. "*Thou canst not hit it.*"

This is imitated in *Wily Beguiled*, 1606, where we also meet with recollections of the Shakespearian incidents of the Jew robbed by his daughter, of the moonlight scene, where Lorenzo and Jessica converse, and of the lover, who carves the name of his mistress

on the bark of trees. The author of *Wily Beguiled* had evidently seen or read the three plays where these episodes occur: *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *As You Like It*.

Act iv., Sc. 3. "*Jaq.* God give you good morrow, master person."

Person for *Parson* is usual enough. In Luke Shepherd's Dialogue, printed about 1548, the form is *Mast Person*. The older spelling is the more correct, as the parson was and is the representative of the congregation before the Almighty.

Ibid. "*Hol.* Good old Mantuan—"

The *Eclogues* of Baptista Spagnuoli of Mantua was a book read in schools in the poet's day, and may well have been seen by him at Stratford. The Latin text was constantly reprinted.

Act v., Sc. 2. Song between Spring and Winter.

This beautiful lyric is a striking contrast to the main text, and suggests later composition.

The word *squire*, which is found in this play for *square*, and which is in Mr. Bartlett's Concordance entered under *squier*, occurs in the Shakespearian sense in the English version of Bloome's *Architecture*, 1608.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

Dramatis Personæ. *Beatrice.* The certainly fascinating and piquant character of this lady was not at all improbably based on a real person, for that there were women of rank with similar traits, striking the worldliest among us as with all their gaiety and broad fun delightfully pure at heart, the *anecdota* of Sir Nicholas Lestrangle of Hunstanton furnish repeated proofs. These stories are merely such as Lestrangle noted down from hearsay or otherwise; but they carry their moral and their value as parallels:—

"Sir Henry Yelverton's lady us'd to say of anyone that was a widower, and had a son to inherit his estate, and desir'd a second wife, that nobody would have him he was so sun-burnt."

"Mrs. Ratcliff, an old courtier in Queen Elizabeth's time, told a Lord, whose conversation and discourse she did not like, that his wit was like a custard, nothing good in it but the sop, and when that was eaten, you might throw away the rest."

"Sir John Heydon and the Lady Cary had good wits, and lov'd to be breaking of staves one upon another. Sir John comes in one day very brisk, in a pair of printed velvet breeches (which was then the fashion), but some way defective, so as she had a

flurt at them presently. 'Hold you contented, good madam,' says he; 'for if it were not for printing and painting, your face and my breech would soon be out of fashion.'"

"The Lady Cary us'd to tell Sir John Heydon (for their two wits were ever clashing) that, when he was poor, and never a penny in his purse, he was as good company as any was in England, but that if he was but forty-shilling strong, there was no dealing with him on any terms."

This class of repartee belongs to the same school and period as that attributed to the sprightly and superbly incorrigible Beatrice, with the notable difference, that in the latter case we enjoy the advantage of the superior taste and delicacy of the dramatic artist as well as his superior wit.

The effervescent vivacity, mad merry vein of Beatrice, and her robust animal spirits, present a foil to the gentler and more softly feminine Hero. Portia in the *Merchant of Venice* is invested with something of the same exuberant, almost hysterical, gaiety and ingenuous frankness.

Act i., Sc. i. *Messenger.*

The messenger here introduced must be understood from the part assigned to him to be a diplomatic personage. The laying the scene in a street is unusual, and is not to be reconciled with the open air life of Sicily.

Sigh away Sundays.

An apparent reference to the practice of Sunday weddings, which, as I mention above, the poet incongruously made applicable to all ranks of society.

Act ii., Sc. i. "*Bened.*" Ho! now you strike like the blind man—"

A direct allusion to the story in *Merry Tales and Quick Answers*. See my *Old English Jest Books*, i., 142. In the same act and scene Beatrice is made to say that it was imputed to her that she was disdainful, and had her good wit out of the *Hundred Merry Tales*. The lady's obligation to the latter, of which two editions are known, but of which others not known probably once existed, is not immediately conspicuous, although the poet could hardly fail to be acquainted with both works at least by repute.

"*Beat.* Thus goes every one to the *world* but I, and I am sunburnt." Dr. Johnson proposed that we should read *wood*, for which Mr. Hunter censures him, but I do not. The antithesis intended was between a place, where the sun shone, and where it did not. In Vincent's *Discovery of Errors in Brooke's Catalogue*

of the Nobility, 1622, the Address to York Herald (Brooke) has near the opening the following sentence:—"I acknowledge, he that walkes fiftie yeeres in the Sunne, cannot choose but bee Sunburnt"—where the expression is evidently used to signify the acquisition of experience.

Act iii., Sc. 3. "*Dogb.* Five shillings to one on't, with any man that knows the *statues*—"

The two forms *statute* and *statue* appear to have been long used interchangeably. Here *statue* is misapplied as a trait of ignorance. But see *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Madden, p. 25, where the same thing is found.

Act v., Sc. 2. "*Bened.* . . . I can find out no rhyme to *lady* but *baby*."

This is a skit at Peele's song in the *Arraignment of Paris*, 1584. But see also Chappell's *Popular Music*, 92, 179, 187.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

The German version of the interlude in the Gryphius volume, 1663, was, as usual, adapted to suit local taste. It seems strange that Shakespear should have formed so humble an opinion of the Court of Theseus as to present to it a farce suitable for a country barn; and the question arises, whether this feature, as well as the Induction to the *Taming of a Shrew*, were not originally prepared for some rural entertainment in Warwickshire. There is nothing in either, which Shakespear might not have written, before he left the country in 1586-7.

In his *James the Fourth*, 1598, but probably printed earlier, as it was licensed in 1594, Greene has introduced an interlude of *Oberon*. See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, v. *King of Fairies*. *Oberon* is a conspicuous character in the ancient romance of *Huon of Bordeaux*.

In 1623 Sir Henry Herbert licensed, as by Ford and Decker, "a new play called the Fairy Knight." I hardly know whether a 4^o MS. before me has anything to do with this otherwise lost piece. It is called: "The ffairy Knight Or Oberon the Second." In it Politico, a foolish politician, is the pretended king of Fairies, and Loswello is the fairy knight.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

This is sometimes quoted as the *Venetian Comedy*. It is fairly well known, that there was an anterior drama on the subject. The ballad was probably founded on the play, as usual.

The story of the Bond is common to excess; one of the earliest places where it occurs is in the *Gesta Romanorum* (edit. Madden, No. 40); and much the same may be predicated of the ring in Act v. Rings have figured in romance since the production of the *Seven Wise Masters*.

Dramatis Personæ. Shylock. See what is said in my *Venetian Republic*, 1900, ii. 749, as to the probable origin of the name and as to the mode, in which the character should be attired.

Portia. This name seems to be borrowed from the lost drama by Thomas Kyd, mentioned by himself in 1594. The idea of a lady disguised in male equipments conducting a cause in a Venetian court is chimerical—a sheer impossibility.

Portia is an impersonation as historically outrageous under the actual circumstances as the episodes in the *Bravo of Venice*. Such a stratagem would have been simply out of the question, where the scene is laid. Yet, take the character as a whole, we would rather not be without her.

Act i., Sc. 1. “*Gra.* There are a sort of men”

The visages likened to the thick slime on the top of a stagnant pool.

Sc. 3. “*Shy.* Three thousand ducats—”

The poet had an imperfect conception of what this sum represented, as the Venetian ducat was = $\frac{9}{5}$ of English money, so that 3000 d. would be = about £1400 or £9000 of our present money. The gold piece had no mark of value and no name; the silver one was termed *Ducatus Venetus* not *Venetorum*, as Hunter gives it.

“*Shy.* Water-thieves and land-thieves—”

See *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Madden, p. 246. Shylock, just below, adopts what is still a favourite device, in disclaiming the personal possession of so large a sum as Antonio requires—but he has a friend!

Sc. 9. “Even in the *force* and road of casualty.”

Force should be *face*. *Road* is equivalent to *path*.

Act iii., Sc. 1. “*Shy.* Out upon her!—”

Note the fine conflict of feeling.

“Meet me at our synagogue—”

What a remorseless satire!

Act iii., Sc. 2. "*Shy.* Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions?"

The use of the word *dimensions*, which Shakespear here introduces, may be perhaps illustrated from a passage in Montaigne (*Essais*, var. ed. 1874, ii. 211), where, speaking of watchdogs' dreams, he says:—"Les chiens de garde, que nous voyons souuent gronder en songeant, & puis iapper tout a faict, & s'esveiller en sursaut, comme s'ils apperceuoient quelque estranger arriuer: cet estranger que leur ame void, c'est vn homme spirituel, & imperceptible, sans *dimension*, sans couleur, & sans estre."

Act iii., Sc. 5. *Laun.* . . . thus, when I shun Scylla . . ."

What could Lancelot or Jessica know about the story?

Act iv., Sc. 1. *Venice. A Court of Justice.*

Historically this scene is a misconception, as the Duke or Doge at this time never presided in person over the Courts. The poet should have known, that the same was the case at home. The scene, where the Duke is made to say, "Make room," is mere grotesque caricature.

"*Shy.* If every ducat."

This is purely rhetorical.

"*Por.* Of a strange nature is the suit you follow,
Yet in such rule that the Venetian law
Cannot impugn you."

Portia would have had great difficulty in substantiating this statement.

"*Bass.* . . . But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life."

This is a reproduction of the classical sentiment—the friend less easily replaced than the kindred, and more to be cherished or lamented. Shakespear seems to have immediately borrowed the idea from Montaigne.

Act iv., Sc. 1. "*Port.* . . . It is enacted in the laws of Venice—"

A pure poetical invention.

Sc. 2 "*Port.* . . . we shall have *old* swearing."

Observe the peculiar sense of the word. It is still in use; but this is an early example.

Act v., Sc. 1. "*Lor.* There's not the smallest orb which thou beholds't,

But in his motion like an angel sings."

In this passage Shakespear has been thought to be under obligations to Montaigne, Book i., ch. 22; and I have in my Essay shown that the poet probably made use of the French text, and not of Florio's version. The *Merchant of Venice* existed, much as we see it, in 1598. Just at the commencement of this speech by Lorenzo, where he is made to say: "Sit, Jessica," let it be observed that the two are already seated on a bank, and that he now invites the attention of his female companion to certain of the astronomical bodies, which people usually stand to observe. I would read: "See, Jessica."

I do not know whether it will be thought ungraceful hypercriticism to speak of the dialogue between the lovers just above as rather too redolent of the inkhorn—as misappropriated learning.

Act v., Sc. 1. "*Port.* If you had known the virtue of the ring"

Observe the unique iteration for emphasis.

For the Rialto scene the prolegomena to Robert Tofte's translation from Nicole de Montreux of *Honour's Academy*, 1610, may be worth a glance. See my Dodsley, ix., 220.

Is this not rather a melodrama than anything else? A tragical climax is in a manner threatened, but only threatened. Its citation as the *Venetian Comedy* is not altogether improper.

Perhaps it has not hitherto received sufficient attention that Shakespear associated two of his dramatic labours, this and *Othello*, with a remote Italian city and government, of which the English knowledge was at that time comparatively slender and inaccurate, since it was derived either from apocryphal publications or travellers' hearsay. The older piece, called the *Jew of Venice*, is no longer known; Shakespear puts the Merchant in the forefront; but Antonio does not contribute to make the production what it is so much as Shylock and one or two other *dramatis personæ*. The main point, however, is that certain political circumstances, set forth in my new *History of Venice*, rendered the place and name just about the time objects of peculiar public interest, and conferred, as I say, on the Republic the unique distinction of being twice identified with this series of masterpieces. The most substantial testimony of this fact may be the appearance in 1612 of a translation by W. Shute from the French of M. de Fougasses of the *General History of the Magnificent State of Venice*, a large folio volume with a map and other illustrations, which it must have cost

a considerable sum to produce; and it is not quite irrelevant to mention that it was dedicated to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery.

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

This drama is stated to have been produced in an unusually short time for performance before the Queen. The date of its composition has been variously given. But in the text, as printed in 1602, there is an incorrect quotation from *England's Helicon*, 1600, of a ballad-poem, first printed, I believe, in that miscellany, though written before 1593, when the author (Marlowe) died. In the accepted version it is fuller, yet still inaccurate; but the sole point is that, unless Shakespear met with the verses in MS., he appears to have borrowed the extract from the 1600 volume, with which, as I have elsewhere stated, he was not only in all probability acquainted, but to which he was a contributor.

Dramatis personæ—*Sir Hugh Evans*.

Shakespear made early acquaintance with the Welsh and their peculiarities, as there were settlers in his boyhood at Stratford from the Principality. See my *Shakespear's Library*, iii., part 2, p. 108.

Act ii., Sc. 1. *These Knights will back.*

An inserted reference to suit the extravagance with which James I. created knights as a means of raising money. The words of the text form the title of a contemporary ballad.

Sc. 2. "*Shal.* . . . I hear the parson is no jester."

For *jester* we should probably read *juster* or *jouster* = fighter. Comp. Act iii., Sc. 1.

Act iii., Sc. 3. "*Mrs. Ford.* How now, my eyas musket!"

Comp. *Merie Tales of Skelton*, No. vi.

Act iv., Sc. 5. "*Simple.* I may not conceal them, sir.

Host. Conceal them, or thou diest."

Simple seems to misuse the word *conceal* for *reveal*, unless it is a misprint.

Act v., Sc. 5. "*Fal.* Divide me like a bribe-buck."

This sentence and notion are perhaps derived from a tract by John Lacy, called *Wyl Buck his Testament*, printed about 1560, for in *As You Like It*, Act ii., Sc. 1, Jaques is quoted as having said: "Poor deer, thou mak'st a testament."

The German Duke, who visited England in 1592, is said by some of the editors to have travelled under the name of the *Count*

Mombeliard. But the Dukes of Würtemberg were also by marriage Counts of *Montbeliard*, in Burgundy, a title which they retained down to the French Revolution.

The present play is said to have been presented at the Cockpit as late as November 15, 1638.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

Act iii. Sc. 1. "*Claud*. Ay, but to die, and go we know not where."

This passage, and the one in *Hamlet*, may be compared with Montaigne, i., 19; but more is said on the subject *suprà*. The remark of Claudio, just below: "I am so out of love with life," seems forced and abrupt.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

Act v., Sc. 3. "*Lapeu*. . . . Good Tom Drum, lend me a handkerchief."

The "Historie of Tom Drum" forms part of Deloney's *Gentle Craft*, 4^o, 1598. He was the ancestor of Jack Drum, the hero of a play ascribed to Marston, and printed in 1601.

TAMING OF A SHREW.

The writer of the foundation-play, 1594-96-1607, was indebted to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*. The plot, a very common one, is found in *El Conde Lucanor*, by Juan Manuel, 4^o, 1575, ch. 45. The name *Tamburlaine* itself is a barbarous corruption of *Timourlenk* or *Timour the Lame*.

Induction. The story of the Induction may have something to do with the reputed adventure of the poet himself, when he spent the night under a hedge or in a barn, after a merry-making at a neighbouring village.

In the first scene of the induction note the abrupt and forced conceit where the sleeping man is supposed to be discovered—"Lord. What's here?—" The story is an Oriental one—Haroon-El-Reschid and the Caliph of a Day.

Enter Players.

This seems to be the prototype of the far finer and more thoughtful passage in *Hamlet*.

Act i., Sc. 1. "*Luc*. . . . I am arrived for fruitful Lombardy."

Surely *for* should be *from*. The speaker has left the fruitful region behind him, and has come to profit by the course of learning pursuable at the *Studio* or University of Padua.

“*Luc. Basta.*”

This word should be printed in Italics.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

Some remarks on the *dramatis personæ* and the obligations of Shakespear to Lodge’s *Rosalynd*, 1590, will be found in the text. One minor incident, the inscription on the tree-bark, is directly borrowed from the novel; and the Author of *Wily Beguiled*, 1606, again, has adopted it from one or the other—more probably from Shakespear, whom he seems to have studied.

Act ii., Sc. i. “*1st Lord.* . . . ‘Poor dear,’ quoth he, ‘thou mak’st a testament.’”

Compare note on *Merry Wives of Windsor*, v., 5.

Act ii., Sc. 6. “*Jaques.* ‘Good morrow, fool,’ quoth I; ‘No, sir,’ quoth he, ‘call me not fool, till Heaven hath sent me fortune.’”

See my *English Proverbs*, 1882, pp. 144, 146, and Montaigne, *Essays*, 1902, iv., 48. Jaques alludes to the common adage: “Fools have fortune.”

Act iii., Sc. i. “*Duke Fred.* . . . But were I not the better part made mercy.”

This sentence is rather elliptical. The sense is, “But were not the better part of me made of mercy” or merciful. Comp.: *Henry VI., Part II.*, Act i., Sc. 3: “*Duch.* Though in this place most master wear no breeches”—i.e., she, who is most master, wears no breeches.

Sc. 3. There are allusions to the *Gargantua* of Rabelais and to Ovid’s *Ex Ponto*, which must have been derived from the French or from oral communication.

Act ii., Sc. 4. *The world’s a stage.*

This idea occurred to Pythagoras and to Palladas the grammarian, of whom the latter lived eleven centuries before Shakespear. He says :—

“This life a theatre we well may call,
Where every actor must perform with art;
Or laugh it through, and make a farce of all,
Or learn to bear with grace his tragic part.” *

* Hazlitt’s *Studies in Jocular Literature*, 1890, p. 62.

In an old English play, written about 1566, *Damon and Pithias*, the comparison of Pythagoras is cited* in these terms:—

“Pythagoras said, that this world was like a stage,
Whereon many play their parts.”

and in his *Essays* Montaigne introduces the same sentiment from Petronius Arbiter: “*Mundus universus exercet histrionem.*” We thus gain a consensus of opinion and sympathy on the similitude of a transitory existence to an actor crossing the boards from the pens of philosophical writers living so many ages apart. So early did the figure strike a thinker as appropriate and picturesque, and so hard it has proved to add to it any new force. I meet with a parallel sentence: “*Mundus scena, vita transitus: venisti, vidisti, abiisti.*” It is the identical conceit. But our poet, perhaps feeling that the thing was *decies repetita*, improved on the old saw by making it a peg whereon to hang the *Seven Ages of Man*.

Act ii., Sc. 7. “*Jaq.* And then he drew a dial from his poke.”

This allusion is merely quoted for the sake of mentioning that, at a period long after that of the poet, the usage of carrying sun-dials as time-keepers prevailed in the Midlands and North. A ring dial of the 17th century, which had belonged to a ploughman employed on Worksop Manor, was lately advertized as having been obtained from his descendant. He bore it, not in his pocket, like the fool in the play, but on his breast—perhaps he had no pocket.

Act ii., Sc. 7. In the passage, where Jaques says: “A fool! A fool!” and afterward, as a sort of aside (“a miserable world”), Hunter would substitute *ort* for *world*, and points out that *ort* recurs in *Troilus and Cressida* in the sense of *fragments*. I do not agree with the change, but think that a mark of admiration is wanted after *world*. The word *ort* is not properly explained; it is = Dutch *oort*, the quarter of a duit, a mere fraction.

A WINTER'S TALE.

This play was also originally known as *A Winter Night's Tale*—a sequel to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Richard Niccols owed to it the suggestion of his *Winter Night's Vision*, and the editors of the 1623 folio decided on a title not likely to clash with the latter, yet clearly less expressive and appropriate.†

* Dodsley's *Old Plays*, ed. Hazlitt, iv., 31-2.

† It is worthy of remark that George Stevens, on the back of a letter addressed to him by Garrick about 1770, cites this play as a *Winter Night's Pastime*, and assigns to it the improbable date 1594 as that of the original completion or performance.

Dramatis Personæ.—Autolycus.

This character is apparently indebted to Newbery's *Dives Pragmaticus*, 1563, reprinted from the only known copy in my *Fugitive Tracts*, 1875.

Act i, Sc. 2. "*Leon.* . . . Or else be impudently negative—"
Should we not read impotently?

Act iv., Sc. 3. "*Shep.* . . . Who loves *another* best.
Read *the other*."

"*Mop.* . . . I love a ballad in print. . . ."

The ballads here recited are skits on those which actually appeared, and of which some are extant.

Act v., Sc. 3. *Giulio Romano.*

I have referred to this personage and passage *suprà*.

As regards the apparent geographical solecism in placing Bohemia on the sea-coast, there was long a prevailing ignorance on these points among early writers other than scholars. The indifference to accuracy did not affect theatrical success. Jonson, in his *Masques*, almost overwhelms us by his shew of erudition; but then they were for the Court. There is a vague mention of the *Land of Bealm* in the ballad-romance of *Roswall and Lillian*.

Shakespear even treats it as a *port*.

KING JOHN.

Act i., Sc. 2. "*Fal.* Sirrah, you giant . . ."

Falstaff addresses his diminutive page, and speaks ironically. I suggest *young giant*.

Act v., Sc. 7. "*P. Hen.* . . . his pure brain
(Which some suppose the soul's frail dwelling house)."

This strikes me as a most extraordinary proof of the poet's insight, standing in place of advanced scientific knowledge, since he here clearly announces his own hypothesis, couched (as usual) in general terms, as to the identity of the soul with the brain, although he did not go so far as to trace that of the brain with the blood; nor was it necessary for him as a dramatist to do so.

HENRY IV., PART I.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "*2 Carrier.* . . . this house is turned upside down, since Robin Ostler died."

"*1 Car.* Poor fellow! never joyed, since the price of oats rose; it was the death of him."

The interest of this passage is in a manner considerable, for the scene laid at Rochester seems to be founded on the poet's first experience at Shoreditch as a servant of James Burbage, and this Robin was in Burbage's employment previous to the arrival of Shakespear in London as a permanence.

"2. *Car.* Why, they will allow us ne'er a jordan, and then we leak in your chimney."

This passage is very curious, because *to leak* is the exact English equivalent of the French *faire l'eau*; and the French do not employ the latter in such a sense, while we say *to make water* = to leak.

Sc. 3. "*Poins.* How the rogue roared." [Exeunt.

Halliwell-Phillipps owned an unique fragment of an edition of this play, held by him to have preceded the ordinary known one of 1598, and he took occasion to remark, that it is the only existing record of the true reading in Poins's speech: "How the *fat* rogue roar'd!" Yet the Clarendon Press recent one-volume impression omits this word. I have had elsewhere to call attention to the indifferent execution of this and the cognate Cambridge book. They are alike untrustworthy. Nevertheless, they are both beautiful—ly printed.

Sc. 4. "*P. Hen.* What manner of man, an' it like your majesty?"

Too high a praise cannot be given to this subtly humorous impersonation by Falstaff of the King and his reference to himself as the sole eligible associate of the prince. The passage is a masterpiece of invention and wit.

"*P. Hen.* Hark, how hard he fetches breath: search his pockets."

This is where discovery is made of Falstaff's tavern-bill and of the disproportion of ale and bread. But it may be worth while to indicate a not unlikely source for the humorous notion in one of the *Merry Tales of Skelton*, informing us, "how the Welshman did desire Skelton to aid him in his suit to the king for a patent to sell drink." See Hazlitt's *Studies in Focular Literature*, 1890, p. 170.

HENRY IV., PART II.

Dramatis Personæ. Lord Bardolph.

It strikes me as a breach of propriety in a dramatic series, where there was the opportunity for revision, to give the same

name to two such different characters as Lord Bardolph and the Bardolph of the *Merry Wives*; and it is almost worse with the two Jaques in *As You Like It*. The form *Bardolph* seems to be derived from the Fr. *Bardoulf*.

Induction. "The blunt monster with uncounted heads."

See Warton's *H.E.P.*, 1871, iii., 172, where he refers to this passage, but speaks of Shakespear describing Rumour with *many tongues*.

Act v., Sc. 1. "*Davy*. Yes, sir. Here is now the smith's *note*."

Note = invoice, which is still the sense in French and other languages.

Act ii., Sc. 4. Where Pistol is made to say (Globe edit. 1895): "*Si fortune me tormente, sperato me contente*," which is absolute nonsense, he may be meant to blunder. Anyhow, the poet found the quotation in Copley's *Wits, Fits, and Fancies*, 1595; and the correct form is: "*Si la fortuna me tormenta, la speranza me contenta*." For Copley either gave it wrongly, or Mr. Collier (*Bibl. Cat.* 1865, i., 156) has not accurately transcribed the passage from the ed. of 1614, which he employed.

Act v., Sc. 4. "*Doll*. Come, you thin thing; come, you rascal!"

The sense of *rascal* in this passage is probably well understood; it is a term used in the *Book of St. Albans* to signify a lean animal, and again in *A C. Mery Talys*, 1526, repr. 1887, folio ix. *verso*.

HENRY V.

The French contained here may have been within the poet's competence, or it may have been revised for him by friends—perhaps by Richard Quiney.

Dramatis Personæ—*Bardolph*.

See Note to K. Henry IV., Part 2, *suprà*.

Act i., Sc. 2. Sumless treasures.

Should we not read *sunless* treasures? The sense appears to require property withdrawn from the light of the sun rather than wealth of measureless extent. It is a peculiarly Shakespearian turn of expression.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "*Nym*. . . . I will *do* as I may."

Should not we read *die*?

Sc. 3. "Quick. . . . and a' babbled of green fields."

This is the famous emendation of Theobald, 1726. The line does not occur in the 4^os of 1600 and 1608.

"Boy. Yes, that a' did, and said they were devils incarnate."

A recollection of Lodge's tract, which Shakespear uses again, when he makes Gobbo, in the *Merchant of Venice*, refer to Shylock as "a very devil incarnation."

"Quick. . . . but then he was *rheumatic*."

A malapropism for *romantic*.

HENRY VI.

See Hunter's *New Illustrations*, ii., 63, where the original drama, which Shakespear altered, is supposed to have been written in 1587.

In 1602 Thomas Pavier the stationer entered the *first and second parts of the Contention* as the *first and second parts of Henry VI.*; but the same person published the *Whole Contention* in 1619. *Henry VI.*, as we now have it, first appeared in the folio of 1623.

HENRY VI., PART II.

Act i., Sc. 3. "Duch. . . . Though in this place most master wear no breeches."

Compare note on *As You Like It*, iii., 1.

RICHARD II.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "Duke of York. . . . Report of fashions in proud Italy,

Whose manners still our tardy apish nation
Limps after in base imitation."

The writer probably had in his mind, when he set down this passage, the title-page (nothing more) of a dull puritanical tract, entitled: "The English Ape, the Italian Imitation, the Foote-Steppes of Fraunce," &c., 4^o, 1588. And elsewhere, the Duke of Norfolk, says Shakespear:—

"Retir'd himself to Italy,
And there at Venice gave
His body to that pleasant country's earth."

But a different view of the matter presents itself in my *Venetian Republic*, 1900, ii., 583.

RICHARD III.

Act v., Sc. 3. "Ratcliff: My lord; 'tis I. The early village cock

Hath twice done salutation to the morn."

Read *Clock*. In Chaucer (*Nonne Prestes Tale*) we have:

"Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge,
Then is a klok or an abbay orologge."

And Browne (*Brit. Past.* i., 4) writes:

"By this had chanticleere, the village-clocke,
Bidden the good-wife for her Maids to knocke:"

The sense is, that chanticleer served the village for a time-piece, which was otherwise deficient. The words are spoken in the vicinity of Market-Bosworth.

In a play, where the king is the central figure almost throughout, and where his personal prowess and natural character are brought forward into conspicuous relief in the closing scene at Bosworth, it is important to have before us as clear a conception as possible of the physical aspect of Richard in relation to his alleged humped back; and the reader or editor may advantageously refer to a remarkable document printed by Robert Davies (*Extracts from the Municipal Records of York*, 1843, p. 220) and the explanatory note, which embodies the evidence of a contemporary of the king. This presumed eyewitness does not specify a humped back, but a disparity in the height of the shoulders, the left one being lower than the right.

HENRY VIII.

Some kind of abridged adaptation of *Henry VIII.* seems from a notice in a jest-book called *Fragmenta Aulica*, printed in 1662, to have been in existence at that date, or before, and to have been performed at a school. The tradition as to the vocal impersonation of the king was then fairly fresh and accurate:—

"A Company of little Boyes were by their Schoolmaster not many yeares since appointed to Act the play of *King Henry the eight*, and one who had the presence (or the absence rather) as being of a whining voice, puling spirit, consumptive body, was appointed to personate *King Henry* himselfe, only because he had the richest cloaths, and his Parents the best people of the parish, but when he had spoke his speech rather like a Mouse than a Man, one of his fellow Actors told him; If you speak not *HOH* with a better spirit and voyce, your Parliament will not grant you a Farthing."

This passage shews that the *Hoh!* key was regarded as proper and essential to the part.

Act v., Sc. 1. "*K. Henry*. Avoid the gallery . . ."

In my edition of *Shakespear's Library* under the play I give the parallel passage from Fox's *Martyrs*, which seems more dramatic than the scene from the play itself.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

This drama, performed at the Middle Temple in February, 1601-2, concludes, as we know, with the Clown's song, "When that I was and a tiny little boy;" and the refrain, "With hey, ho, the wind and the rain," is strictly in unison with the structure of several Elizabethan madrigals. But, moreover, the composition seems to have given rise to a popular ballad; for in a volume printed in 1605, under the title of *Laugh and Lie Downe, or the worldes Folly*, we meet with a list of such pieces then professedly current, and among them, "O, the winde and the weather and the raine." I scarcely know whether the season at which *Twelfth Night* was performed at the Temple had anything to do with the tenor of the ditty put into the mouth of the clown. Shakespear himself, judging from numerous allusions in the plays, was not indifferent to the weather, and went so far at last as to base one of his finest productions on it, namely, the *Tempest*.

In the song above mentioned, where the clown doubtless accompanied the words with characteristic and significant gesture, I should be inclined to read: "When that I was, *ah!* a tiny little boy." For the word *and* scarcely bears any sense in either of its acceptations; and comp. the song in *Hamlet*: "To contract, O, the time, for, *ah!* my belove—"

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

The piece on this subject cited by Anthony Wood was almost certainly in Latin.

It is very remarkable that on February 7, 1602-3, a play was registered as "The Booke of Troilus and Cressida, as it is acted by my Lo. Chamberlains men," and as the work of Chettle and Decker. It is almost undoubtedly the same production as that mentioned by Henslowe in 1599; but it is no longer known, so that there is no means of collation with Shakespear's drama.

The latter was licensed January 28, 1608-9, and published, 4^o, 1609; and a circumstance is associated with the first printed copy, which may, in the presence of the testimony to an anterior work, favour the theory, that the drama, as we possess it, was not

originally, and is not wholly, from the pen of Shakespear; for when the printing had been completed, a cancel title was given, in which it was disclosed, that the piece had been performed at the Globe by the king's servants, whereas on the original forefront there had been no hint of it having been placed on the stage.

Act iii., Sc. 3. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

This line is given to Ulysses, and does not seem to carry, where it occurs, our modern acceptation, nor is it easy to decide what the poet really meant from the context, the next line proceeding to reflect on the fickleness of general taste. Even taking the familiar sentence in our present way of interpreting it, it does not exactly import the signification attached to it, but rather that a natural touch everywhere draws man and man together.

HAMLET.

The Rev. Joseph Hunter (*New Illustrations of Shakespear*, ii., 203) gives 1598 as the date of the earlier play, either by Shakespear or another dramatist. He should have said 1588, and this was apparently the piece licensed for performance by the Lord Admiral's and Lord Chamberlain's men at the Newington theatre, June 9, 1594. Now, a difficulty arises, if it be one, that on July 7, 1602, Henslowe paid Henry Chettle, in earnest of "The Danish Tragedy," 20s., that is, of a new production so entitled; and it is wholly uncertain, whether the work was completed, or, if so, is extant. But it seems singular that three dramatic efforts: the First sketch of *Hamlet*, 1588, the printed copy, 1603, and this play by Chettle, should be concurrently, as it were, before the public, where the subject was not one of striking popularity, since the Danish marriage of James VI. of Scotland was barely sufficient to awaken so lively an interest in so remote a region. Of course, the *Danish Tragedy* by Chettle might have been wholly unconnected with the *Hamlet* in any form. But comp. *Troilus and Cressida*, *suprà*.

The Hamlet quoted by Lodge in his *Wit's Miserie*, 1596, was doubtless the one shown at the Newington playhouse in 1594.

In a very uncommon volume by John Clarke, entitled *Paræmiologia*, being a collection of proverbs, published in 1639, there is the saying: "A trout with four legs hamlet." There is no such passage in the Shakespear play; and it may be a sentence supposed to be characteristic of the Danish prince. I give the name exactly as it presents itself in the original. Is there a possibility that the saying is a salvage from the older drama, or one of them,

which reached the proverb-gatherer by hearsay? The introduction of the adage into plays was, equally with the ballad, an ante-Shakespearian device, and constituted part of the scheme in the elder playwrights of popularizing their performances, and catching the popular taste.

I conclude that for theatrical accuracy the Dane ought to be represented with flaxen hair; but we have Hamlets of all complexions as well as statures. The real one is said to grow *pursier*, as the dramatist may have done in middle life. It is a play for the closet. The imagination can paint best the stage effects and accessories.

The misanthropic vein, so conspicuous in this play, in *Timon*, and to a certain extent in *Lear*, betrays itself in the celebrated song in *As You Like It*, commencing, "Under the Greenwood Tree," and in the character of Jaques. But the misanthropy of the banished Amiens is perfectly unlike that of Hamlet or Jaques, as all fail to resemble the misanthropy of Timon or of Lear, where the operating agency is ingratitude, yet, again, ingratitude of a totally different nature and origin. The caustic humour of the Prince of Denmark is a product of intellectual insight, that of Jaques of physical temperament, carried almost to affectation or whimsicality. We seem to recognize the personal idiosyncrasies of Shakespear himself behind Hamlet in a far greater and truer measure than in the other cases. This would be the piece of autobiography, which I should be most unwilling to discredit and surrender.

Act i., Sc. 1. "It faded on the crowing of the cock."

Comp. *History of Tom Thumbe*, 1630 (Hazlitt's *Popular Poetry*, ii., 191):—

"And so with peace and quietnesse
he left this earth below;
And vp into the Fayry Land
his ghost did *fading* goe."

Act i., Sc. 5. "*Pol.* Ay, springes to catch woodcocks."

An expression borrowed by Henry Parrot for his volume of Epigrams, 1613. He adopted another title from this play, the *Mouse Trap*.

Act ii., Sc. 2. "*Ham.* . . . for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so:"

Comp. Montaigne, I., 19, "*Que le goust des biens et des maux, &c.*"

"—were it not that I have had dreams."

Comp. Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*:—

"For sure they saw't, for Æthiops never dream."

Coleridge once said to W. Hazlitt, when the latter told him that he did not dream, "Then you have no imagination."

"*Ham.* Ay, sir, to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand."

This, strangely enough, appears to be an exact inversion of the author's sense. Should we not read: "Ay, sir, as this world goes, to be honest, &c."

"*Ros.* . . . we coted them on the way."

Coted = accosted. We keep the old French form *accoster*.

"*Ham.* Look, where my abridgments come"—i.e., the actors.

Act iii., Sc. 1. "*Ham.* To be, or not to be, that is the question."

This passage, and one in *Measure for Measure*, are compared *suprà* with one in Montaigne.

"Get thee to a nunnery: Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?"

Read: "Why, wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners!"

Sc. 2. "*Ham.* . . . A very very *Paiocke*."

Some explain this to be a *baiocco*, a Roman copper coin; but I fear that there were no baiocchi contemporary with Shakespear. I suggest *pie-O*, the *O* being a pleonasm.

Act iv., Sc. 2. Where the Prince of Denmark speaks of a player wearing two Provençal roses in his slashed shoes, it is more or less material here to mention that for *Provence* we ought to read *Provins*.

"*Pol.* Do you know me, my lord?"

Ham. Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

Pol. Not I, my lord.

Ham. Then I would you were so honest a man."

This reference of Hamlet seems to be ironical. Fishmongers, even in the time of Elizabeth, enjoyed a bad name as regraters and extortioners; and the unreasonably high price of fish is a matter of particular remark in the Fishmongers' pageant of 1590, recovered a few years since by me.

It was the same at Rome and Athens. See St. John's *Manners and Customs of Ancient Greece*, 1842, iii., 99.

Act v., Sc. 1. "*Ham.* Let me see. Alas! Poor Yorick!"

See a curious copy of verses founded on this passage in my *Inedited Poetical Miscellanies*, 1870, called "A Conference with a Dead Man's Head."

Where Hamlet says: "Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft," we are reminded of what the Rev. Robert Davenant, son of John Davenant of Oxford, was heard by Aubrey to have said of Shakespear in relation to himself: "I have heard Parson Robert say that Mr. W. Shakespeare has given him a hundred kisses." Kissing was more habitual between men at that time than at present. The poet knew Davenant as a child in his father's house—knew him about the same age that I hold Tarlton to have known him. The passage in the play had of course been written some time, before Shakespear and the Davenants became acquainted.

In the same act and scene we get the phrase, which is put into the mouth of the clown, "*crowner's* quest law," and it is explained by the authorities as a vulgarism for *coroner's*; but in a tract printed in the reign of Henry VIII.—"The enquire and verdite of the quest pannell of the death of Richard Hune," of which the only known perfect copy is now before me, Thomas Barnewell is described at the end as "Crowner of the Citie of London."

"The age is grown so picked."

Picked appears to be a term borrowed from the peaked or piked shoes formerly in use, and the sentence immediately succeeding may be thought to corroborate such an etymology. But the definition of *nice* or *spruce* is also admissible as a secondary meaning or acceptance.

Just above, where Hamlet takes up the skull of a lawyer, we gain the benefit of his conversance with professional technicalities through his kinsman Greene or a glance at West's *Symboleography*, or both.

Chappell (*Popular Music of the Olden Time*, i., 54) refers to the air *down, a-down* as to be sung to the movement of the spinning-wheel. The poet transferred to the play a piece of his own personal observation at home.

OTHELLO.

This play is not true to history. No Moor was ever employed by Venice, and the facts of the campaign in Cyprus are altogether different. In 1604, when *Othello* is said to have been composed, the Cypriot episode was well within memory; the Battle of Lepanto, which followed it, occurred in the autumn of

1571. The Venetian house of Moro, which gave a Doge to the Republic and a second distinguished personage in the shape of a great soldier in the preceding century, may have occasioned the mistake. Note here the contrast between Black and White, the sexual sympathy of opposite colours, carried on from the Sonnets.

Othello had been entered to Lawrence Hayes in 1619; he was the son of Thomas Hayes, who had printed one or two of Shakespear's dramas. But when Thomas Walkley re-entered the play in 1621, instead of naming it, as Hayes had done, the *Æthiopian History*, he registered it under the name now familiar, lest it might be confounded with a new edition of Heliodorus then in the press. The *Merchant of Venice* had been published by the elder Hayes in 1600, and the scene of *Othello* was partly laid in the same locality.

The original designation is interesting, because it shews the conception of what the hero should appear.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "*Iago*. Come on, come on; you are pictures out of doors."

Compare a passage in Middleton's *Blurt, Master Constable*, 1602 (works ed. Dyce, i., 280), which reads like the prototype of the one in Shakespear.

Act iv., Sc. 3. *All the green willow.*

Such a ballad, possibly the same, is cited in *Laugh and lie down, or the World's Folly*, 1605, by C. T., as sung to the famous tune of Dingdong. This is so far important, that it was almost concurrent with the first presentation of *Othello*.

ANTHONY AND CLEOPATRA.

Act v., Sc. 2. "Hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus here?"

In Churchyard's verses before Gascoigne's *Posies*, 1575, he says:—

"The kinde and loving worme that woulde his ladie please."
In Germany I am informed that a mother will call her child "a little worm."

I have elsewhere noted that this drama was separately registered, May 20, 1608, though no such edition is known. The poet apparently had the subject before him, while he was engaged in the composition of *Macbeth*.

LEAR.

See Madden's *Gesta Romanorum*, p. 450. And also Stories 15 and 33.

Act i., Sc. 4. "*Fool*. . . . That such a king should play bopeep,

And go the *fool* among."

Perhaps there was the intention to play on the similarity between *fool* and *foule*, Fr. for crowd or throng.

The character of Cordelia may have been indebted to the *Phænissæ* of Euripides, translated by G. Gascoigne, and publicly exhibited in 1566. See the impersonation of Antigone in the latter.

PERICLES.

The *Pattern of Painful Adventures*, licensed in 1576, to which the author was perhaps indebted, is a Novel of great interest and conspicuous excellence, from which a dramatist would come away with many valuable suggestions. *The Adventures of Pericles*, by George Wilkins the younger, 1608, is principally serviceable for a few good readings, the author having compiled his book from notes taken at the theatre.

Randolph, who died in 1635, alludes to *Pericles* in his Cambridge "Oratio Prevaricatoria," 1632 :

"*Insignis Pericles non audet tam celebres res.*"

And in his "Hey for Honesty" the same writer speaks of the hero of the play once more :

"*Penia*. Nay if this were so, the very tailors, though they damned you all to hell under their shopboards, would scorn to come to the making up of as good a man as Pericles, Prince of Tyre."

The gifted and witty satirist was born within Shakespear's time—before Milton, and it is a pity that he failed to lend his testimony to the authorship of the drama, which he almost certainly saw on the boards. As it is, we seem to have no earlier witness than Dryden, who, where he says: "Shakespear's own muse his Pericles first bore," seems to suggest an early composition—a criticism, which has received later support.

MACBETH.

A play with this title was apparently performed within the knowledge of William Kempe the actor, and is referred to in his *Nine Daies Wonder*, 1600, as something which he had not seen, and of the title of which he was dubious. He describes it as "the miserable stolen story of Macdoel, or Macdobeth, or Macsome-what," by a penny poet. It scarcely seems probable that this is the same composition, which is noticed by Wake in his *Rex*

Platonicus, 1607, as a *lusiuncula* exhibited before James I. in 1605 at St. John's College, Oxford, and which was not necessarily in Latin, although Wake confers on it a Latin name. See Buchanan, *Rerum Scotticarum Historia*, 1582, folios 73-4.

The *Merry Wives*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest* became the receptacles for the result of the poet's reading and observation in the attractive field of fairy mythology; and so in *Macbeth* he found full and happy scope for his studies of witchlore, which then yet more powerfully appealed to the popular fancy. Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* had appeared in 1584, and whatever may be said of it, its popularity cannot have been great, owing perhaps to its bulk and price; for it was not reprinted till 1654. But Shakespear may very well have had his attention directed to it; and it was a topic in so many mouths, that material and information sufficient to qualify an author—especially such an one—for his task were never lacking; and, besides, the commentators enumerate other literary productions within his reach, while he composed the play, where in the *Dramatis Personæ* the witches occupy a place and rank equal to those of the fairies in the other pieces named.

The tragical interest is not less strong here than in *Hamlet* and *Othello*, yet how different! The philosophical vein is rather less pronounced; the low comedy is almost absent; and the necromantic element does not indemnify us for the loss of Ariel and Puck, since there is little which rises above the ordinary accounts in books, thrown into metre and dialogue.

The sentiments and mental reach of *Macbeth* are utterly beyond probability—far more so than those of the Prince of Denmark. We have only to figure to ourselves what sort of person a Scottish sovereign of an almost prehistoric era is likely to have been, how little removed from a savage chief, to be convinced, that here once more Shakespear has used the license of a playwright to make his personality transparent through one of his characters; and where the result is in a literary and poetical respect so excellent, we have to reconcile ourselves to the sacrifice of some of the unities.

The arguable presence of Shakespear at Oxford in 1605, when theatrical performances were prepared in honour of James I. and his court, suggests his elaboration of the subject of the *lusiuncula*, which with the *Vertumnus* of Matthew Gwinne was exhibited at Oxford on that occasion. Both these pieces were probably in Latin, and combined to send his majesty to sleep. The Scottish plot of the *Macbeth* naturally recommended itself to the poet, whether he actually witnessed the performance or not, as a

favourable opportunity for pleasing the new dynasty, as at an earlier date he had in a sense dedicated the *Merry Wives* to the last of the Tudors. The Latin interlude served no farther than as a hint for a study; it hardly supplied a nucleus or outline; and the tragedy is essentially Shakespear's own conception and execution, with all its beauties, all its strength, all its incongruities. There are passages here in which Shakespear almost surpasses himself; and it is a moot point, whether we should not accord to the Ghost of Banquo precedence over that of Hamlet's father. It is undoubtedly a more conspicuous and laboured feature in the production, and may be held to exhaust Shakespear's fancy in this direction. The poet, since the completion of *Hamlet*, had had opportunities of collecting all that could be said on the matter, if we place the composition of *Macbeth* somewhere about 1608.

In the Address to the Reader before his *Lancashire Witches*, 1691, Thomas Shadwell has the candour and good sense to say: "For the Magical Part, I had no hopes of equalling Shakespear in fancy, who created his Witchcraft for the most part out of his own imagination (in which faculty no man ever excell'd him) and therefore I resolved to take mine from authority. And to that end, there is not one action in the play, nay scarce a word concerning it, but it is borrow'd from some antient or modern Witchmonger which you will find in the notes."

Act i., Sc. 3. "1 *Witch*. . . . I'll do, I'll do, I'll do."

This emphasis, and artifice of composition, resembles that of the ring in the *Merchant of Venice*, v., 1:—

"If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring—"

Act i., Sc. 3. "*Ban*. The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, . . ."

Notice the similarity of touch or treatment to *Hamlet*.

Sc. 5. "*Lady Macbeth*. . . . yet do I fear thy nature,
It is too full of the milk of human kindness."

Not only does this description of Macbeth fail to correspond with what has been previously said of him as a warrior, but his wife is made to give vent to her passionate feelings too immoderately and too abruptly, as it is her first entrance on the scene. Such dark and bloody purposes require more leisurely and gradual evolution.

Sc. 7. "*Macb.* If it were done, when 't is done . . ."

All this is good and very good; but the language and philosophy are those, not of the speaker, but of the dramatist throwing himself back hundreds of years, and giving Macbeth the benefit of his own more advanced period and, far beyond that, of his own matchless invention—such as never entered into the head of any one of his nation before or since. The interlocation between the Thane and his wife strikes us from the outset as a continuation of something, which has gone before; the speakers have laid the foundations of their plot *in camérâ*. We see, when we arrive at the third scene of Act iii., how well Lady Macbeth has dissembled, or how unobservant Macduff has been of her character.

Act ii., Sc. i. "*Macb.*"

With Tarquin's ravishing sides"

The passage is doubtless corrupt; and the true reading is not immediately evident; perhaps for *sides*, for which the justification is not strong, we might try *shade*, i.e., ghost. The motion is stealthy and rapid. I wish to call attention to the remembrance by the poet of his own *Lucrece*, published so long before.

In the dialogue between the Thane and Lady Macbeth we seem to be required to discriminate between the brave soldier, who faces danger and death in the battlefield, and yet shrinks from the commission of the act, to which he is urged by his callous and domineering consort.

Sc. 3. "*Enter a Porter*"

This is a characteristic diversion and artifice to break the monotony of the tragical action.

Act iii., Sc. i. "*Macb.* . . . my genius is rebuk'd, as t'is said,

Mark Antony's was by Cæsar"

Two points seem to be worthy of consideration here: the absurd attribution to Macbeth of a knowledge of Roman history and the apparent allusion to Mark Antony as a character already treated, as if *Antony and Cleopatra* had been completed, or as if the subject were at least before the poet, when he penned the present lines and those in Act v., Scene 7. Moreover, in this stage of the play, we perceive the mastery and moral deterioration, which Lady Macbeth has wrought over her husband, who, having scrupled to murder Duncan, has not only been over-persuaded, but has hardened his nature to the commission of a second murder without the need of instigation. The scene between Macbeth

and the proposed assassins of Banquo is far more natural than some of those preceding it; and in the following scene, where Lady Macbeth reappears, her lord assuredly ceases to yield her any ground of displeasure or fear on the score of irresolution.

In this Act the interposition of Hecate is abnormal and mysterious, and in Act iv., Scene 1, Macbeth is represented as enjoying the privilege of conversational intercourse with her and the three witches previously introduced as addressing Macbeth and Banquo, but as vanishing when addressed by them in turn.

Act v., Sc. 7. "*Macb.* . . . But swords I smile at,
Weapons laugh to scorn,
Brandish'd by man that's of a woman born."

This is the latest moral evolution of the Thane, and it proves a fatal and retributive one. He is infatuated by his supposed invulnerability, and is slain by Macduff.

ROMAN PLAYS.

The insinuations by Jonson, and possibly by others, of his want of scholarship, and the appearance in 1579 of the English version of Plutarch's *Lives*, were doubtless contributory agencies in leading Shakespear to turn his attention to a field, which he had so far only slightly touched in his lyrics and perhaps in *Titus Andronicus*. The second edition of the Plutarch came in 1595 from the press of his friend and countryman Richard Field, who had published the *Venus and Adonis* two years prior; it is impossible to say with confidence, that such was the case; yet it is an extremely plausible idea, that the poet, frequenting the shop or office of Field, may have seen there the book, of which he has made so free an use, and even have had a copy given to him. Field brought out another impression in 1603, which would be quite early enough for the plays, and nearer to the period of their composition, while, on the other hand, the commercial dealings of the poet with Field do not seem to have extended beyond 1596. The point is, after all, of the slightest possible consequence; but undue stress has been laid on it by one or two Shakespearian students; and I must go so far as to plead (i.) that the use by Shakespear of an edition of the *Lives* printed in 1612 is barred by the generally admitted circumstance that at that date the poet had completed the series, as well as *The Tempest*, and was preparing to leave London for ever; (ii.) that he had turned his attention, at least in an editorial capacity, to this class of subject—perhaps as early as 1593-4, when the *Most Lamentable Roman** *Tragedy of*

* In the later edition of 1611 this word is suppressed.

Titus Andronicus was licensed for the press, if not actually committed to type; and (iii.) that early in 1608 *Antony and Cleopatra* was entered at Stationers' Hall.

TEMPEST.

Dramatis Personæ. Prospero.

Prospero = in sense *Faustus*, and the character follows at a distance that of the German magician, whose story in prose was published in English in 1592. The delightful creation of Miranda—the maiden who had never beheld a man, except her father, is an inversion of the mediæval fable "*de filio regis qui nunquam viderat mulieres.*"

Ariel.

I offer some remarks on this conception *suprà*.

For the extreme date 1612-13 there is some support in the windy weather of that winter, commemorated by two or three contemporary tracts. But to this assignation it may be validly objected that in 1611-12 Shakespear seems to have resumed possession of New Place, or at all events to have left London; while of stormy periods and consequent shipwrecks there were precedents within the earlier year 1611.

The disputed reading in the song: "where the bee sucks, there {suck} {lurk} I"—would be terminated by me by a judgment for *lurk*; for Ariel, as a spirit, needs no physical sustenance, and indeed I should, if I dared, go farther, and object to the word *bat* in the fourth line, as it is out of symmetry with a cowslip's bell, and even a moth could bear such a burden as Ariel is here represented, although elsewhere in the play he offers himself to our view as a mighty instrument of the will of another.

POEMS.

Lucrece. Shakespear in the edition of this poem published by himself in 1594, entitles it simply *Lucrece*. Why do the Editors presume to call it the *Rape of Lucrece*?

Sonnets. I. "From fairest creatures we desire increase."

So, in the Epistle before Greene's *Menaphon*, 1589, Nash calls Peele's *Arraignement of Paris*, 1584, his "first increase," *i.e.*, offspring. This opening line touches the voluptuous side of cruelty; it is one, which Shakespear at thirty-one was more likely to write than Barnfield as a youth eleven years his junior.

Comp. the cognate sentiment in Sonnet 41 :

"Beautous thou art, therefore to be assail'd"—

And, bearing in mind that the same ardent, pitiless, and almost libidinous, passion lies at the base of the *Lucrece*, we become at liberty to ascribe all three productions to one period and one bias.

II. "When forty winters *shall besiege* thy brow,—
And *dig* deep trenches in thy beauty's field."

For *shall besiege* read *have besieged*, i.e., shall have besieged, and for *dig* read *dug*. The action is progressive, not simultaneous.

"Shall sum my count, and make my *old* excuse."

Read *eld* = age.

V. "Those *hours* that with gentle work did frame."

Hours is a dissyllable—*houres*.

XXIX. Comp. the line :

"Desiring this man's art and that man's scope"—

with what I say about the poetical rival at p. 215. And, again, the serenade in *Cymbeline*, ii., 3, with the lines in the same stanza :—

"Like to the lark at break of day arising

From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate"—

where we have the *primum stamen* of the production in the play and an argument for the authorship of the Songs by the poet.

CVII. "And peace proclaims *olives* of endless age."

Read: "And peace proclaims *an olive* of endless age."

The text, as it stands, is neither sense nor metre. In the Cambridge verses on Cromwell, 4^o, 1654, the Protector is described as *Oliva Pacis*.

CXXVII. "In the old age," &c.

This stanza is characterized by undisciplined and immature power and taste, which may bespeak it anterior to the Pembroke and Fitton date.

CXLIII. "Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch."

Here we seem to have an early domestic reminiscence of Stratford in the first years of married life. Comp. p. 219.



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